

PRESS RELEASE

National Healthcare Group Launches Network to Boost Senior Volunteerism in Central and North Singapore

The network will build a sustainable senior volunteerism movement where care organisations pool together resources to support seniors to live well in the community

For Immediate Release

Singapore, 18 October 2023 – Our seniors are integral to building the social and psychological capital of an ageing society. This was the key takeaway at the Singapore Patient Conference 2023, organised by Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) Centre for Health Activation (CHA).

Held under the theme of "Senior Volunteerism in Health and Social Care", the conference saw the launch of the **NHG Network for Senior Volunteers** with 17 health and social care organisations in Central and North Singapore (refer to Annex 1 for a list of key partners). Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Law presided over the event.

The new network will pool programmes, resources, and place-based volunteering opportunities from its partners and be the platform for seniors to learn valuable skills and knowledge on how to care for themselves and others in the community.

Research studies have shown that seniors have different preferences in their causes, volunteering companions and types of volunteering activities compared to the general population. Care organisations can leverage these preferences to ensure the active participation and engagement of seniors or develop an interest in volunteering for the less supported areas. There could be a focus on skills-based volunteerism based on the preferences and experiences of seniors.¹

"Senior volunteers enable our ageing-in-place programmes. With an ageing population, we are seeing new social drivers of health, including seniors living alone, frailty, and dementia. The network seeks to connect and enable seniors to access meaningful volunteering opportunities and foster a stronger sense of community within each neighbourhood," said Professor Eugene Fidelis Soh, Deputy Group CEO (Integrated Care), National Healthcare Group (NHG) and CEO, TTSH & Central Health.

Network partner Mr James Tan, Chief Executive Officer from TOUCH Community Services, shared: "We are excited to be part of this collective effort to promote senior volunteerism. This complements our community enablement approach to grow and develop residents as resources to help seniors age in place. This network further builds on our strong collaborations with partners as it will open up more co-learning opportunities, expand our volunteer pool, as well as meet the aspirations of seniors to be meaningfully engaged."

"Volunteering is part of social prescription. It will benefit not just seniors who are well but also those who want to improve their health. Engaging in meaningful activities within the community keeps our seniors physically active and improves their social and psychological well-being. Importantly, it also allows the community to tap on and benefit from their vast experience and knowledge," said Dr Tjan Soon Yin, Singapore Patient Conference Co-Chair and Senior Consultant, Rehabilitation Medicine, TTSH.

¹ National Volunteer And Philanthropy Centre Individual Giving Study 2021

Accessing Volunteering Opportunities through the NHG Cares App

Volunteers will soon be able to tap into volunteering opportunities in Central and North Singapore through the NHG Cares App. The mobile app will match seniors' interests and locations with suitable place-based volunteering opportunities.

Additionally, senior volunteers can tap on the training opportunities offered through the app to enhance their skill set. For example, the CHArge Up! Learning Programme, initiated by TTSH's Centre for Health Activation (CHA) in 2018, has already trained more than 1,000 residents on practical day-to-day living and health tips. New modules like nutrition for the elderly will be introduced to encourage better dietary practices among seniors, particularly those with health conditions such as dementia.

CHArge Up! Learning Programme participant Mr Stanley Peh (74 years old) applied what he learned from TTSH's Occupational Therapists on "Creating a Safe Home Environment to Reduce Risks of Falls" to make his home safer and share this knowledge with his friends. Beyond the classroom, Mr Peh and his friend volunteered with TTSH at community screening events, where they asked participants lifestyle questions to assess their health needs and goals.

"I have been actively volunteering for over ten years and enjoy learning health-related information. Volunteering with a friend allows us to do good together. With this new network for senior volunteers, we will be able to explore more volunteering opportunities in different settings, from hospital to the neighbourhood near our homes, sharing our knowledge with our senior friends and staying active," said Mr Peh.

Celebrating Heroes in Health and Social Care: Singapore Patient Action Awards

The 9th edition of the Singapore Patient Action Awards (SPAA) received 151 submissions this year and recognised 24 exceptional individuals and groups for their outstanding contributions to the community. These recipients epitomise qualities of compassion, empathy, resilience, and a generous spirit (see Annex 2 for this year's SPAA award recipients and their stories).

TOUCH Community Services' Seniors Caring for Seniors (SCS) Programme is among the recipients honoured in this year's SPAA - Singapore Patient Support Group / Volunteer Group Award category. SCS adopts a proactive approach to health, leveraging peer influence to inspire seniors to embrace physical and mental well-being. The programme equips seniors with essential healthcare and preventive knowledge, empowering them to effectively care for themselves and others.

Mdm Sapiah (63 years old), once a recipient of support, was introduced to the SCS programme to help her navigate the challenges following her husband's passing. Today, she finds renewed purpose and happiness as a befriender under SCS. Alongside another senior befriender, she provides psychosocial support to four isolated seniors aged 60 to 84.

Mdm Sapiah emphasises the importance of connecting with peers and giving back to the community. "Get out there, chit-chat with friends, and learn new things. Just take that first step, and they will see the difference!" she shared.

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About National Healthcare Group

The National Healthcare Group (NHG) is a leader in public healthcare in Singapore recognised for the quality of its medical expertise and facilities. Care is provided through an integrated system of primary care polyclinics, acute care and tertiary hospitals, and national specialty centres. Together, we provide comprehensive and innovative healthcare to address the unique needs of our patients and the population we serve.

As the Regional Health Manager for 1.5 million residents in Central and North Singapore, NHG through its Central, Woodlands, and Yishun health networks collaborates with private general practices, public and community health and social care providers to keep residents well and healthy.

The 22,000 healthcare professionals in NHG are committed towards building healthier and resilient communities, and Adding Years of Healthy Life to the people we serve.

About Singapore Patient Conference

Since the inauguration of the Singapore Patient Conference in 2013, it has grown to become a continuous empowering and engagement platform for Singaporeans. Into its eleventh (11th) year, the Singapore Patient Conference (SPC) is a unique patient-centred conference where we bring together a community of passionate patients, caregivers, patient advocates, volunteers, social care partners and healthcare professionals to co-learn and co-create a better health and social care system.

SPC is jointly organised in partnership with Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Central Health, Centre for Health Activation (comprising patient volunteers and healthcare staff), National Healthcare Group Institutions (Institute of Mental Health, Yishun Health and National Healthcare Group Polyclinics), AMKFSC Community Services Ltd and TSAO Foundation.

The conference is also complemented by the ninth edition of the Singapore Patient Action Awards, where we bring the stories of our communities to life, shining the spotlight on many invisible heroes by amplifying their stories of compassion, resilience, kindness and selflessness. Since 2005, we have received more than 790 nominations and honoured more than 130 individuals and groups who have demonstrated exemplary qualities of care and contributed to health and social care in meaningful ways.

Annex 1

NHG Network for Senior Volunteers



Key Partners:

- AMKFSC Community Services Ltd
- AWWA
- Care Corner Singapore Ltd
- Dover Park Hospice
- Home Nursing Foundation
- Institute of Mental Health
- Khoo Teck Phuat Hospital
- Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital
- Methodist Welfare Services
- NTUC Health
- Ren Ci Hospital
- St Luke's Eldercare
- Tan Tock Seng Hospital
- Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities
- TOUCH Community Services
- Tsao Foundation
- Woodlands Health

Annex 2

Singapore Patient Action Awards (SPAA) 2023 recipients

Category	Award Recipient
Singapore Patient Caregiver Award	Mdm Cindy Tan Chai Hon Mdm Evelyn Chng Guek Cheng
	Mdm Ivy Yong
	Mdm Kengeamal D/O Chinniah
	Ms Leong Woon Tai Helen
	Mr Pichaymuthu Salomon
	Mr Raymond Anthony Fernando
	Ms Sally Yeong
	Mr Seeni Davis
Singapore Patient Advocate Award	Mr Albert Louis
	Mr Allan Cai Chenxi
	Ms Sherry Soon
	Mr Yong Kwon Seng
Singapore Patient Support Group / Volunteer Group Award	Amputee Support Group
	Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu-Chi Foundation (Singapore)
	Diamond Group
	Seniors Caring for Seniors Programme
Singapore Patient Engagement Initiative Award	Call Me, Maybe
	Smaller Bites To Swallow Right
	Touch Art Programme
Singapore Community Engagement Initiative Award	24asia
	Aces Care HelpLife
	Enriching and Mobilising Participation of Whampoa's Elder Residents (EMPOWER)
	SAFEHOUSE