



MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
SINGAPORE

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**SPEECH BY MR GAN KIM YONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AT THE GROUND-  
BREAKING CEREMONY OF WOODLANDS HEALTH CAMPUS, ON 18 APRIL 2017,  
TUESDAY, 8.30AM**

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Minister Khaw Boon Wan, Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure &

Minister for Transport

Mdm Halimah Yacob, Speaker of Parliament

Mr Amrin Amin, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs

Advisors for Sembawang and Marsiling-Yew Tee GRCs

Ms Jennie Chua, Chairman, Alexandra Health System

A/Prof Pang Weng Sun, Acting GCEO, Alexandra Health System

Dr Jason Cheah, WHC Pro-Tem Planning Committee Chairman

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

### **Introduction**

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Woodlands Health Campus (WHC). The Campus will open progressively from 2022, and will comprise a general hospital, community hospital, nursing home and daycare facilities for our seniors.



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## Healthcare campus for the north

2. The WHC project is a key component in HC2020 to meet our future healthcare needs against the backdrop of a growing and ageing population. When completed, the two hospitals at WHC and the existing two hospitals in Yishun – Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and Yishun Community Hospital – will provide a total of 2,400 hospital beds. It will serve the growing population in the north, especially the mature estates of Woodlands, Marsiling and Sembawang. WHC is also well-placed to support the growth of Woodlands as a regional centre. Campus visitors and staff will enjoy the convenience of the upcoming Woodlands South MRT station nearby, integrated cycling paths and major expressways, thanks to the Transport Minister.

3. With the re-organisation of our public healthcare system into three integrated clusters, WHC will be part of the National Healthcare Group (NHG) in time to come. WHC will complement the existing suite of healthcare services and programmes offered by both NHG and Alexandra Health System (AHS), including Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Yishun Community Hospital and Admiralty Medical Centre in the north. The well-established network of NHG polyclinics in the region, including Yishun Polyclinic and Sembawang polyclinic, which will open in 2020, will also be strategic partners for WHC.

## Healthcare for the future

4. WHC will have to be future ready. Faced with the challenges of growing healthcare demand due to an ageing population and a rising chronic disease burden on the one hand, and manpower constraints in the other, we need to transform the way we deliver care so that we can serve Singaporeans well and sustainably. Each time we build a new healthcare facility, it presents a precious opportunity to innovate and reinvent the way we deliver



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healthcare. So while we are gathered today for the groundbreaking of the new healthcare facility buildings, I want to challenge the WHC management team to also break new ground in the way they deliver and organise their services and in how they care for the population in the northern region. The new WHC must work with its partners to create One Healthcare Campus providing seamless, person-centric care, and to embrace technology and innovation to improve productivity and provide better care for patients.

### **One Healthcare Campus**

5. With the new WHC, we should not be just about adding beds to the system and operating very much “business-as-usual”. Rather, we should take the opportunity to develop new care models to enable the shift towards greater community-based care. WHC will be the first healthcare campus in Singapore to fully integrate an acute hospital, community hospital and long term care facility in a single development. While there are other healthcare campuses in Singapore which also have a community hospital and nursing home located next to a general hospital, this is the first campus where all the facilities are conceptualised and built at the same time.

6. This would enable WHC to better integrate care, break organisational boundaries and enable patients to seamlessly move from one facility to another according to their care needs – from the acute hospital to the community hospital or nursing home, or from the community hospital to the nursing home. It will enable patients to be treated and rehabilitated effectively in the appropriate setting, so that they can return home to their loved ones as soon as possible. To achieve this goal, the WHC team must build links not just within the campus, but also work closely with community care partners, including GPs and VWO service providers. The integration of support from community care providers and



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other social networks is critical in empowering patients and their family members to take charge of their health and enable them to stay well.

### **Embracing technology for better care**

7. The second area in which I hope to see WHC pioneer is the application of smart technology to raise the bar for patient care. A recent article by *The Economist* envisioned the hospital of the future to resemble an air-traffic control tower, from which the healthcare team monitors its patients whether they are in the hospital or at home. In this model, patients are not passengers but co-pilots, and technology extends the reach of healthcare professionals such that “a hospital can also be at home”<sup>1</sup>. In this future-ready hospital, technology has revolutionised care delivery, even as it enables manpower constraints to be overcome.

8. These possibilities are exciting. This is why I have challenged the WHC team to be bold in the adoption of SMART technology, automation and IT innovations, and incorporate these in its design of the new campus – from building design to hospital operations, from care delivery to patient experience. I am glad to see that they are taking this challenge seriously. For example, many of WHC’s services are expected to go online. Manual work such as filling in medical information or ordering medications can be automated, allowing healthcare professionals such as nurses to focus on their clinical and direct patient care roles. But beyond reducing or eliminating the non-core work of healthcare workers, technological tools such as data analytics and artificial intelligence can augment the care they provide, maximising patient outcomes at each touch point. The high technology environment can simultaneously be a high productivity and high touch setting.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote attributable to Lord Ara Darzi, surgeon and professor at Imperial College London, cited in “A prescription for the future: How hospitals could be rebuilt, better than before” (*The Economist*, 8 Apr 2017)



9. But we cannot introduce technology for its own sake. We need to do so smartly, so as to maximise value for patients. Even as we strive to do more with less, we must bear in mind what is fundamentally important to patients – that is, care which is safe, appropriate and effective, and the assurance that they are in good hands. Designing a care model with this in mind will help us avoid adopting technology blindly, and enable us to deliver care that is truly value-based.

### **A healing environment and inclusive campus**

10. Finally, beyond healthcare, WHC aims to be a space for health and healing. I am pleased that green spaces such as the Healing Forest Garden and Therapeutic Gardens have been carefully conceptualised and designed into the campus. They will be enjoyed by patients and residents alike, for both recreation and rehabilitation. WHC should be an inclusive campus for all.

### **Conclusion**

11. The development of a new hospital is a challenging, but exciting task. I would like to congratulate the team on the groundbreaking of the new Woodlands Health Campus today, and wish them all the best in the building of the new campus. We look forward to the completion of WHC in 2022.

12. With the support of the advisors, community leaders and residents, I am confident that Dr Jason Cheah and his team will deliver on these challenges, and that WHC will be a pioneer among the next generation of healthcare facilities, achieving triple “wins” – a more



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effective and productive healthcare workforce, a better and more sustainable healthcare system, and ultimately, a healthier population.



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