

# NHG PHARMACY

National Healthcare Group Pharmacy (NHGPh) strives to make a difference in the care of our patients by advocating the safe and responsible use of medicine and helping patients achieve the best health outcomes for their prescribed therapy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our pharmacists continued to support and enable patients and caregivers to manage their health and medications safely at home.

## AUGMENTING MEDICATION DELIVERY SERVICES

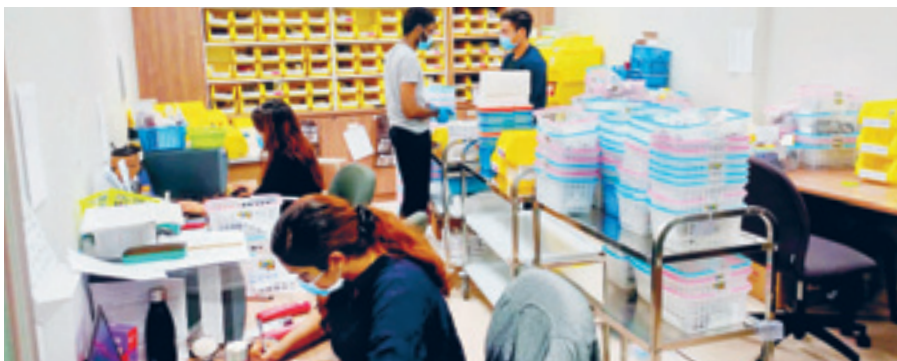
During the COVID-19 outbreak, NHGPh together with National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) and National University Polyclinics (NUP) extended the medication supply and provided medication delivery services for patients with stable chronic conditions. This enabled continued care for patients while keeping them safe at home. In early February 2020, dedicated teams set up enhanced efficiency of medication delivery at polyclinic pharmacies. NHGPh headquarters also provided additional manpower and more couriers were engaged to support the surge in demand of the service.

To better manage workloads at the outpatient pharmacies, the Pharmacy Services Centre (PSC) at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) expanded its Central Fill Pharmacy (CFP) capabilities. The PSC converted a meeting room into a satellite pharmacy equipped to capture prescription, and pick and pack medications. It also created a new dispensing area for pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to conduct clinical and quality control for packed medications before delivery.

By mid-February 2020, the CFP handled 40 per cent of prescriptions requiring delivery, thereby easing the load at polyclinic pharmacies. In 2020, NHGPh on average fulfilled 12,800 medication deliveries per month as compared with 400 deliveries per month in 2019. At the height of the pandemic in July 2020, NHGPh handled a record 21,000 deliveries that month.

## SETTING UP ON-SITE DISPENSARIES AT THE COVID-19 FRONTLINE FACILITIES

In April 2020, NHGPh set up on-site dispensaries at the 14 migrant worker dormitories and four Swab Isolation Facilities (SIFs) assigned to NHG. These dispensaries were manned either by a pharmacy technician or a nurse. During the Circuit Breaker period and up until July 2020, the Yishun Polyclinic pharmacy team handled the logistics of the central supply for medication and pharmacy consumables like packaging materials and multi-lingual drug labels. This covered filling of prescriptions written by doctors at the medical posts and SIFs, and delivery of medication to migrant workers who had chronic diseases but were unable to visit their usual doctor, or obtain their medication.



Top: Volunteers pre-packing medication for on-site dispensaries at migrant worker dormitories. Below: A pharmacy technician dispensing medication at a migrant worker dormitory.

“Emerging from our COVID-19 experience, we will be leveraging on technology and thinking of new ways to collaborate with others to engage, activate, and deliver care to the different segments of the population, so that medications will always be used safely and appropriately to provide the best health outcomes.”

**Ms Chan Soo Chung**  
Executive Director, NHG Pharmacy

### ORGANISING INFORMATION FLOW

In June 2020, FasXpress was introduced at the CFP to enable organised information flow from the source system, which helped eliminate manual transcription.

This resulted in an estimated time savings of 8.3 man hours per 1,000 prescriptions. The system used barcode and drug images to validate and verify medications. It improved medication safety by ensuring the right drugs were picked and packed, and delivered to patients.



### DRUG DISPENSING SYSTEM (DDS) GOES “LIVE” AT ANG MO KIO AND YISHUN POLYCLINIC PHARMACIES

To automate workflows, NHGPh introduced robotics to handle non pre-packed blister strips with variable quantities. The Drug Dispensing System (DDS) and Automated Tote Handler (ATH) were rolled out at the pharmacies in Ang Mo Kio and Yishun Polyclinics in April and June 2020, respectively. The DDS packed medication blister strips on demand into Ziploc bags and printed patient-specific instructions. Boxed medications could also be picked and affixed with patient-specific labels. The ATH aided in the seamless consolidation of these Ziploc bags and boxes, readying them for dispensing to patients. Both systems increased the pharmacy automated workload to 80 per cent, and improved overall accuracy.