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SPEECH BY DR JASON CHEAH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AGENCY FOR INTEGRATED CARE 护联中心总裁谢延成 AT HMDP-ILTC AWARDS CEREMONY 2010 ON 9 JULY 2010, 9.30 AM, ST ANDREW'S COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Good morning,

Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health & Ministry of Manpower

Canon Louis Tay, Board Member of St Andrew's Community Hospital

Representatives from Ministries, government agencies and hospitals

Our valued partners from the Intermediate and Long Term Care (ILTC) Sector

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. A very warm welcome to all of you to our First Health Manpower Development Programme (or HMDP) Awards Ceremony! We are grateful for your presence in joining us on this important occasion to lend our support and encouragement to the learning journeys of 48 unique individuals from the Intermediate and Long-term Care sector. We have called the award the HMDP-ILTC Award. It's a mouthful but nonetheless, a very meaningful one I'm sure for each person who has been accorded this award. We have organised today's ceremony as we think it is important to celebrate the success of these individuals, and to recognise their contributions to the community care sector.

2. This Award signifies the commitment by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) to continually develop the skills and capabilities of the ILTC workforce in Singapore. The anticipated “silver tsunami” will mean that demand for intermediate and long-term care will grow significantly and rapidly. We would therefore need a better trained, more highly skilled and professionalised workforce to meet the challenges ahead.

3. Since taking on this role in the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) last year, I have been paying visits to a number of community care providers including the community hospitals and nursing homes. Each time, I would be struck by the passion and commitment shown by the people I have met. I admire this ‘heart factor’ that drives and motivates them, and I am convinced that when you pair the ‘heart and ethos’ with continuous learning and lifelong growth and development, an excellent ILTC workforce will be in the making. After having spent the bulk of my professional life in the public hospitals and institutions, I’ve come to realize that the healthcare workers in the ILTC sector are truly our “unsung heroes”, quietly but surely bringing comfort and care to their patients.

4. I’ve observed that despite being very lean in terms of staff strength and training resources, ILTC institutions have been doing what they can to upgrade their skills. Today, I’m very happy to announce that much more help is on the way for this sector.

5. Over the past 8 years, close to 300 professionals in the ILTC sector have benefited from local and overseas training to enhance their skills and broaden their horizons. With AIC now managing the HMDP-ILTC on behalf of MOH, we can and should do more. We have implemented a number of key improvements to make the fund more attractive and relevant to ILTC institutions. Firstly, the budget has been significantly increased from several hundred thousand dollars to now S\$1.2M annually. We have also identified

four key focus areas for higher amount of funding. They are: Gerontology and Geriatrics, Palliative Care, Mental Health & Psycho-Geriatrics and Medical Surgical Nursing. Applications for training in these areas will receive 100% funding if successful. This is to encourage more professionals to obtain advanced training in these key and critical areas to meet the emerging healthcare needs of our ageing population.

6. I understand that many voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) have serious manpower constraints and this has made it difficult for some to release their staff for training and advancement courses. HMDP-ILTC addresses this problem by providing funding for locums as well. With the money, organisations would be able to hire extra manpower to cover the duties of the staff who are away for training. The eligibility period of this locum payment has been extended from 3 months to 6 months and should give ILTC institutions added impetus to take up this training opportunity.
7. Our government has recognised the importance of streamlining and integration of healthcare in the ILTC and primary care sectors. AIC has been entrusted with a key role to make this a reality so patients can move seamlessly from one healthcare provider or setting to another. Last year, AIC was restructured to be the “national care integrator” to promote the integration and development of the ILTC sector with an aim to create a well-connected healthcare system. We are also tasked to look at the professional and industry development to raise the profile and the standard of this sector. Let me now outline how AIC is working with a host of parties and partners to enhance the knowledge and skills of the professionals working in the ILTC sector.
8. An important milestone and initiative to enhance training and development in the ILTC sector is the recent formation of the ILTC Manpower Council. This industry-led Council provides a common platform on which ILTC institutions tackle manpower issues collaboratively. As relevant government agencies and AIC are part of this Council, issues will be tackled not only at the sectoral level, but also at the systems level. The Council will look into the important

issues of leadership development, skills and career qualifications and promoting the image of the sector. The Council is new, but has already been enthusiastically pursuing new ideas of manpower development for the sector. I'm most grateful to Dr Loh Yik Hin, CEO of St Andrews Community Hospital who co-chairs this Council with Ms Lynda Soong. I'm also very thankful that a number of key leaders in the ILTC sector have stepped forward and volunteered their time in this Council.

9. Yet another initiative to help ILTC institutions 'upskill' is AIC's formation of the Learning Institute. The Learning Institute plays a number of key roles. At the very least, through its website, it pools together a 'master training calendar' of courses relevant to the ILTC sector. This "one source" of comprehensive information will serve as a convenient training gateway for ILTC institutions and their staff. In time to come, with the right IT support, AIC will be able to help ILTC institutions plan for their training and track training hours on an on-going basis.
10. AIC is also primed to organise various courses to meet current identified skill gaps on the ground. Training will also be needed to support a number of quality improvement initiatives to be rolled out in nursing homes and other community-based providers. The Learning Institute 护联培训学院 will also be identifying new skill sets that will be needed to support the integrated care delivery systems.
11. Today, we are pleased to introduce the AIC Learning Institute portal at www.aic-learn.sg. It is but our first step towards achieving professional excellence amongst the community care providers through continual learning and development. We hope ILTC professionals and care givers will make good use of this portal, and benefit from a variety of ILTC training courses listed online. Through this effort, we hope to facilitate the creation of a culture of continuous learning and improvement in the ILTC sector. This is a necessary pre-requisite if we are to create a vibrant ILTC industry in Singapore.

12. To the award winners, let me just say congratulations and I hope that this is merely a small part of your quest for further knowledge and skills upgrading and lifelong learning. I hope that you will learn as much as you can while you are away from your day-to-day work, and continue to keep asking yourself how you can apply what you have learnt to your own workplace and patients. To the ILTC organizations who have put these individuals up for the Award, I applaud you for your vision and your courage to send these talented individuals for such training programmes which will enrich the quality of care. To those of you who have not applied to this Award – what are you waiting for?
13. It leaves me now to thank Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, for taking time to grace today's ceremony and to present the awards to the recipients. I would also like to thank St Andrews Community Hospital for very generously allowing us to use their premises for this event.
14. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all award recipients. This ceremony acknowledges your dedication and commitment. I do hope that the skills and knowledge you have acquired will translate into benefiting patients. Thank you.