

**SPEECH BY DR AMY KHOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE TEMASEK CARES-ICOMMUNITY@NORTH
PROGRAMME, 23 JULY, AT KHOO TECK PUAT HOSPITAL**

Mr Richard Magnus, Chairman, Temasek Cares

Mr Liak Teng Lit, Group Chief Executive Officer, Alexandra Health System

Mrs Chew Kwee Tiang, Chief Executive Officer, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

Mr Choo Jin Kiat, Executive Director, O' Joy Care Services

Mr Lee Kim Siang, Chairman, Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities

Dr Jennifer Lee, Chairman, AIC

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

Good morning everyone.

2. I am very pleased to be here for the launch of the Temasek Cares - iCommunity@North programme. This program is one of the first regional community based mental health programmes in Singapore which aims to provide holistic mental health care for our elderly in the community.

3. The programme encapsulates what I first shared in parliament in March this year – that we need to work with, and through, the community to achieve better health outcomes for all. In this vein, this programme has brought together a broad array of partners, including Temasek Cares, Alexandra Health System, the

Agency for Integrated Care and community service providers such as Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities, and O'Joy Care Services, to provide coordinated mental health services to the community.

Mental Healthcare for the Aged in the Community

4. By 2030, one in five Singaporean residents will be 65 or older. In absolute terms, the elderly will increase from 350,000 today to 960,000, or almost one million. With a rapidly ageing population, the incidence of dementia will increase dramatically. By 2030, the number of elderly aged 60 years and above with dementia is expected to increase to 80,000, some two and a half times more than the 28,000 currently. The healthcare landscape in Singapore needs to transform to meet the challenges of our ageing population, and in particular, mental health issues that affect the elderly such as dementia and depression.

5. Over the next five years, the Ministry of Health (MOH) will be working with our partners to implement a series of community-based mental health services, as part of our overall efforts to develop Regional Health Systems to provide integrated care across the spectrum of patient needs. Strengthening community mental health services will improve the integration of the mentally ill with the community, and enable our elderly to age in place.

Temasek Cares-iCommunity@North

6. The Temasek Cares-iCommunity@North pilot is a massive step in this direction. Temasek Cares has provided S\$1.1million seed funding over two years, starting from 2012, to kick start this new initiative. This regional collaboration

brings together different services and community partners to better serve the needs of the elderly with mental illness in the community. Residents in the North, including those living in Admiralty, Marsiling, Sembawang, Woodlands and Yishun, will be able to benefit from services under this programme.

7. At the broad level, the programme seeks to enhance community engagement by educating the public about dementia and other key mental health issues associated with the elderly. This is carried out by the Community Resource, Engagement and Support Team (CREST), an initiative currently piloted by Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities. Other than outreach and engagement, one of CREST's key roles is to help identify patients who suffer from dementia or other mental health conditions, and refer them to the right service for prompt diagnosis and treatment. CREST also provides basic emotional support to the elderly and their families to help them cope with the issues and challenges that they might face.

8. In addition, O'Joy Care Services will be piloting a Community Mental Health Intervention Team (COMIT) which will support General Practitioners (GPs) in caring for the elderly with mental illness. The COMIT will provide psychotherapy, caregiver training and counselling services to the elderly with dementia, and their caregivers and families. The COMIT will also refer them to other health or social services depending on their needs.

9. In order to create a seamless care network between the community and hospital based services, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) will play a crucial role in supporting the CREST and COMIT teams. KTPH will work closely with the

community teams to ensure that patients receive the care they need in both inpatient and outpatient settings. The KTPH dementia team will also provide resource expertise and build the capability of the community teams through training, regular case discussions and conferences.

10. The COMIT pilot started in January and the CREST pilot in February this year. Referrals have begun to flow from KTPH to the CREST and COMIT teams, and we are heartened by the positive feedback received so far. A video presentation on how clients and caregivers have started to benefit from CREST and COMIT will be shown later, and we will also be able to see how the partners of iCommunity@North are working together to ensure the smooth running of the programmes.

These pilots will continue to refine their processes and expertise over time to provide support to mental health patients in the community.

Other Efforts

11. The Temasek Cares-iCommunity@North programme is a good beginning. MOH will be developing another COMIT over the next one year to serve the needs of people in the central region. In addition, two Assessment and Shared Care Teams (ASCAT), which are specialist-led multi-disciplinary teams, will be developed over the next one year to bridge the gap between tertiary and primary care for persons with mental illness. With these community teams in place, a person with a mental health condition can then visit a clinic in his neighbourhood to receive the care he needs, instead of seeing a psychiatrist in a hospital.

12. Other than the two ASCAT and two COMIT teams, we will also be establishing two more specialised teams focusing specifically on dementia patients by the end of next year. Ultimately, we hope to achieve a seamless and holistic mental healthcare network by stepping up our awareness and outreach efforts, expanding the capacity and accessibility of mental health services and enhancing the assistance provided to patients and their caregivers in the community.

Conclusion

13. Our goal of putting in place a regional collaboration of health and social care services would not have been possible without the support of philanthropic organisations such as Temasek Cares. I would like to thank Temasek Cares for their support in kick-starting one of the pilots under MOH's community-based mental health plan. I would also like to highlight AIC's contributions – this successful regional collaboration was made possible through their hard work and continuous efforts in bringing different community partners together under the common goal of enhancing care for patients in the community.

14. I wish the partners of Temasek Cares-iCommunity@North every success in their collaboration as they continue to work together to deliver holistic care for patients.

15. Before I end, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of our nurses, especially those in the mental health and ILTC sectors, ahead

of Nurses' Day which falls on 1 August. Many of them toil long hours to serve the patients who need them, and play a crucial role in our healthcare system. Without their dedication, it would be difficult for our plans to come to fruition. On this note, I would like to wish all nurses a Happy Nurses' Day in advance!

16. Thank you.