



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

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**SPEECH BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH DR AMY KHOR
AT THE HMDP-ILTC AWARDS CEREMONY, 19 OCT 2012, 10.00AM
REN CI COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

Introduction

1. Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to join you at today's Health Manpower Development Programme-Intermediate Long-Term Care (HMDP-ILTC) awards ceremony.

Enhancing Skills and Professionalism

HMDP-ILTC

2. I am inspired by all of you here who have committed yourself to provide quality care to your patients in the ILTC sector. Your work can be physically demanding and emotionally tough. I would like to heartily congratulate all the award recipients. I would also like to thank all your employers who are here to celebrate with you today, for their strong support for staff learning and development.

3. We, at the MOH and AIC, are very happy, to witness the growing learning culture in the ILTC sector. Since 2002, the government has invested more than \$10 million in the HMDP-ILTC programme. The HMDP-ILTC aims to develop manpower capabilities and improve the quality and range of services in the ILTC sector, to facilitate right-siting of care.



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4. But even as we speak of the need to invest in training and deepen skills across the sector, it is the individual stories of commitment and endeavour that often prove to be the most moving. Stories educate, enlighten, humanize and inspire. This morning, I would like to share with you the stories of two of our HMDP-ILTC recipients:

5. Ms Lin Aiting, a Centre Manager with Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA), had previously spent seven years as an IT Software Engineer. Realising that her true passion lies in helping people, she decided to join the sector as a Medical Social Worker. Aiting is passionate about providing the best possible care and support to the people with dementia and their caregivers, a particularly challenging task. Through the HMDP-ILTC award, she will be participating in the 27th International Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International & Clinical Study of Dementia Services London, a conference and clinical attachment. Through this programme, she hopes to gain insight into the range of dementia services that she can develop in Singapore. She will also work on developing up-to-date training for caregivers and support groups, as well as piloting new projects in ADA in her quest to develop world-class dementia care in Singapore.

6. Dr Joseph Ong is an Associate Consultant at Assisi Hospice. One of Dr Ong's interests is developing inter-disciplinary training programmes for the hospice, so that together, they can deliver holistic, person-centred care. Even after having obtained his Masters Degree in Palliative Care, he is continuously looking for opportunities to upgrade himself in this area. This year, Dr Ong is undergoing a Programme in Palliative Care Education and Practice at the Harvard Medical School. Armed with this training, he wants to re-vamp the hospice's existing staff education programme and continue to promote learning and development among his students and colleagues at the Hospice.

7. We continue to seek ways to refine the HMDP-ILTC in order to better support the needs of the sector. For example, one trend is the growing need for integration between health and social services, as we strive to take a person-centric approach to care. In the past, only Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) under MOH were eligible for the HMDP-ILTC. This year, in response to feedback from aged care organisations, we have extended the HMDP-ILTC to healthcare professionals working in other VWOs as well, as



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long as they provide ILTC services such as sub-acute and longer-term rehabilitative care. For example, a physiotherapist who provides rehabilitative services for the elderly will be eligible for the HMDP-ILTC, whether he works in a nursing home under MOH, or a seniors' activity centre under the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports.

ILTC- Upgrading Programme

8. I am also pleased to announce the launch of the ILTC-Upgrading Programme, or ILTC-“UP” this year. Singapore is probably a world leader in conjuring and using acronyms, so what is ILTC-UP? The focus of the HMDP-ILTC is on providing opportunities for staff in the ILTC sector to build advanced skills, such as through a Masters or Advanced Diploma programme. ILTC-UP, on the other hand, is a new initiative supported under the National Productivity Fund. The ILTC-UP complements the HMDP-ILTC in providing an avenue for high-performing healthcare professionals to upgrade their skills and knowledge through a degree upgrading programme. The ILTC-UP supports healthcare professionals, such as our nurses and allied health professionals in the ILTC sector, to expand their knowledge base and contribute at a higher level back in their workplaces.

9. We have 10 ILTC-UP Award winners¹ for 2012. Let me share with you the stories of two of them :

10. Ms Jasmine Tan is a nurse with St Luke’s Hospital (SLH). Jasmine obtained a Diploma in Electrical Engineering at Singapore Polytechnic and worked as an Electrical Engineer for ten years. In 2001, she was diagnosed with colon cancer, which made her reflect on what she wanted to achieve in her life. She decided to make a career switch and pursued a Diploma in Nursing in 2005. Since then, Jasmine has received a total of seven “Individual Employee Service Star” awards in SLH and is confident that nursing is her lifelong career. With the ILTC-UP award, she will now pursue a degree in Bachelor of Science (with Honours) in Nursing Practice at the Singapore Institute of Technology, in collaboration with the University of Manchester, to further equip herself with nursing

¹Out of the 10 recipients, 7 are nurses and 3 are AHPs.



knowledge and skills. Her ultimate aim is to provide the best care she can, for her patients.

11. Ms Suhani Hamzah has been a Staff Nurse at Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hwa Kuan Hospital for ten years. She has 32 years of nursing experience and has always wanted to upgrade her skills through further studies. However, given her heavy commitments towards her family and her five children, up till now, she has had to defer her studies. Now, after more than 20 years, through ILTC-UP, Suhani will be returning to school again to pursue her degree in Bachelor of Science (Nursing) Conversion Programme for Registered Nurses, under Curtin University Singapore. She is very grateful for this upgrading opportunity to deepen her clinical knowledge and practice.

12. The stories of Aiting, Joseph, Jasmine, and Suhani inspire all of us to constantly push ourselves to keep learning and growing.

13. I am sure that next year, we will hear more stories of healthcare professionals engaged in the meaningful work of caring for the elderly within our society, and the world of learning opportunities open to them.

Salary Adjustment for ILTC Staff

14. Having the right skills in place is crucial for the development of ILTC sector. At the same time, there are other aspects of building manpower capacity and capability that we need to work on.

15. One of these areas is ensuring competitive pay. Salaries of staff in the ILTC sector have traditionally lagged behind that of their peers in the acute hospitals, which makes it challenging for the sector to attract and retain good staff. Earlier this year at the MOH Committee of Supply, I announced that the Government would provide additional funding to enable the VWO ILTC sector to raise the pay of healthcare professionals. This has been implemented with effect from April 2012, and the reception of the ILTC institutions and their staff has been encouraging.



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16. However, we have not forgotten about the administrative, ancillary and support care staff, who make up more than half of the manpower in the ILTC sector. They play an equally important role, working alongside the healthcare professionals, to deliver quality care for our patients.

17. I am pleased to announce that we have completed the pay review for administrative, ancillary and support care staff in the ILTC sector. Moving ahead, **the Government will provide funding to support salary increases of between 10% and 24% for more than 3,500 administrative, ancillary and support care staff in the VWO ILTC institutions.** This funding support will apply from September 2012 and will strengthen the recruitment and retention of administrative, ancillary and support care staff in the ILTC sector.

18. Concurrently, we need to think seriously about how we can support the sector on the productivity front, so that salary increases are sustainable in the longer term. It is not an easy task, but we must review processes and find better and more efficient ways of working, and redesign jobs to increase job value. AIC is working with the ILTC sector on this, and we will say more about these productivity initiatives over the course of the next few months.

19. We have a lot to accomplish. With more than 100 aged care facilities across the island needed by 2016, success depends critically on our ability to attract and retain people with the skills and passion to do the job. This effort to transform the ILTC sector and ramp up, in terms of both capacity and capability, is seen through the hard work and commitment of the people who make the sector what it is today. Our award recipients here are part of this crucial group of people who will lead in this transformation, and I know that they will use the knowledge gained from their studies to contribute back to the sector.

20. It is my hope that the initiatives that Government has put in place, whether in the form of training and upgrading opportunities, salary enhancements or productivity



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initiatives, can support the ILTC sector in doing its work. Working together with ILTC employers and staff, I am confident that we can meet this challenge.

21. And finally, to the award recipients, congratulations once again, and I wish you all the best in your learning journey!



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