

Alexandra Hospital to focus on non-emergency cases

Move has cut waiting time for patients

ROSA LINDANG

The newly-renovated Alexandra Hospital (AH) has become the first public hospital in Singapore to stop taking emergency cases, so it can focus on non-emergency procedures needed for a growing elderly population.

This will also free up space at the National University Hospital (NUH), which is in the same health cluster, to take on more complex cases.

AH's new specialist surgical centres and operating theatre services have been fully operational since last month. The 3,630 sq m facility has been open since June last year.

A total of 4,820 patients with non-complex problems, such as cataracts, were directed to AH last year, and this is projected to increase to 6,627 in 2030 with new facilities opening. Waiting time for patients has been cut as staff can give their full attention to non-emergency work.

Mr Low Hsien Chih, head of Alexandra Hospital's surgical



Alexandra Hospital's specialist surgical centres and operating theatre services span a floor area of 3,630 sq m. TNP PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

operations, said: "For non-urgent and high-volume cases, you have to wait on average one to two months for the first consultation using a polyclinic referral to a public hospital. At AH, it is less than five working days."

Dr Wong Weng Hoa, head of AH's surgical and operating theatre services, who shuttles between NUH and AH, told The Straits Times: "I work in hospitals with emergency depart-

ments and noticed the heavy demands of emergency cases on resources, with high daily bed occupancy rates, emergency attendances, and long wait times. AH is designed to provide an environment to enable non-urgent, yet high-demand cases to be done quickly and efficiently, especially for our growing ageing population."

Dr Wong added that AH has two day-surgery theatres and

four major operating theatres, which if used optimally can undertake 600 non-emergency procedures a month. The plan is to have possibly 12 more theatres by 2026, he said.

Some patients will also remain at AH for rehabilitative care after surgery instead of being transferred to step-down care at a community hospital.

sweewena@sph.com.sg