



Clockwise from far left: Ophthalmic technician Nur Rasyiqah Jasmi, 25, assessing retiree Geoffrey Foo, 75, with an iTrace machine for the implant of special lenses for cataract patients with high astigmatism at Alexandra Hospital yesterday; Mr Foo at the post-surgery resting area; and gallbladder removal performed through keyhole surgery at the newly renovated hospital.  
ST PHOTOS: SHINTARO TAY

# Non-urgent care the focus at Alexandra Hospital

Move aims to cut waiting time for patients, free up NUH to take on more complex cases

Rosalind Ang

The newly renovated Alexandra Hospital (AH) has become the first public hospital in Singapore without an Accident and Emergency Department, and will instead focus on non-emergency procedures to benefit the Republic's growing elderly population.

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

However, patients who feel medi-

cally unwell can still visit AH's Urgent Care clinic at any time of the day or night.

AH's new specialist surgical centres and operating theatre services have been fully operational since last month. The 3,630 sq m facility, which was built in the 1930s, 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 more attention to non-emergency procedures.

Mr Low Hsien Chih, head of AH's surgical 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 departments 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 the hospital currently has two day-surgery operating theatres and four major operating theatres, which if used optimally can undertake 600 non-emergency procedures per 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.

Retiree Geoffrey Foo, 75, was supposed to wait six months for his cataract consultation at the Singapore National Eye Centre, but at AH, he had a consultation within five working days – and underwent an operation just five days later.

"My actual surgery only took about 15 to 20 minutes and then I was brought out to sit down and recover for about 45 minutes. I was discharged after that.

"Everything was done within 90 minutes and I was surprised at how well I could see after the surgery," said Mr Foo, who previously worked in property management.

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