

Mental wellness services for 14,000 healthcare workers

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Taking care of the infirm can be draining, but the 14,000 healthcare workers in the National University Health System (NUHS) can look forward to mental wellness services to help them cope on the job.

They will have access to one-to-one counselling, restorative circles for staff involved in a mass crisis or event, and lunchtime talks on coping skills and strategies for the workplace, among other things.

These form part of an agreement signed yesterday between NUHS, Association of Psychotherapists and Counsellors Singapore and NTUC's Healthcare Academy.

There could also be training courses in areas such as self-care and how to handle a crisis calmly.

NUHS and NTUC Health – a so-

cial enterprise in the intermediate and long-term care sector which employs 1,000 people – have also agreed to form company training committees with the Healthcare Academy.

The committees will identify jobs and processes that need to be re-designed amid the healthcare industry's transformation, and implement training schemes for workers.

This comes after a company training committee was set up in May between the Healthcare Academy and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, which aims to benefit 9,000 employees. The healthcare industry employs 81,000 people.

The Healthcare Academy was launched last year by the Healthcare Services Employees' Union, Employment and Employability Institute and NTUC LearningHub.

NTUC secretary-general Ng Chee Meng witnessed the signing

of the agreements at NUHS.

NUHS chief executive John Eu-Li Wong said NUHS aims to enable staff to work well into their 70s if they choose to do so, by equipping them with the skills needed in a digital technological world. It also wants to boost workplace safety and health in a holistic way.

"The physical and mental health of our staff is critical if they are to care for our patients, support their caregivers, educate our students and develop solutions to the challenges we face," he said.

Ms Chan Su Yee, chief executive of NTUC Health, said it also wants to help staff to adapt well to the changing environment. "It is important to equip (staff) to succeed in a job that can be challenging, not just physically but also mentally and emotionally," she said.

Ms Doreen Heng, assistant director of nursing at Alexandra Hospital, has seen fellow nurses feeling discouraged and burnt out after going through demanding situations, such as managing abusive patients.

The 46-year-old said: "I feel it is important to have proactive efforts in ensuring healthcare workers can equip themselves with the mental resilience necessary to be peak-performing individuals and effective 'overcomers' at the same time."

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