



(From left) St Luke's Hospital CEO Tan Boon Yeow, who won the National Outstanding Clinician Educator Award; National Healthcare Group Eye Institute medical director Wong Hon Tym; senior manager Haslina Hamzah of the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) Ocular Reading Centre; and SNEC senior consultant Gavin Tan, clinical director of SNEC Ocular Reading Centre. The latter three won a team award for their work on diabetic retinopathy screening. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Healthcare professionals win awards for innovative work

Choo Yun Ting

Investment in research and innovation is one of Singapore's key strategies in enabling transformation in healthcare, said Health Minister Gan Kim Yong.

Mr Gan told an awards event yesterday that the healthcare system has to transform to meet changing needs and ensure that appropriate and affordable care is available for Singaporeans while being sustainable in the long term.

His remarks were exemplified by the range of healthcare professionals honoured for their innovative thinking at the National Medical Excellence Awards held at Capella Singapore in Sentosa.

The winners included the team that devised an improved screening system to assess patients for diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of vision impairment.

The system has screened more than 267,000 patients in polyclinics, and has been expanded to community healthcare centres and optometry practices.

The future cost savings of the model developed by the Singapore Integrated Diabetic Retinopathy Programme (SiDRP) are estimated to be \$29.4 million.

It has also drastically shortened the time needed to complete test reports. Now, 99.8 per cent of tests are completed in one business day, as compared with two to four weeks under the old method.

For their work, the SiDRP team has won the National Clinical Excellence Team Award – one of six given out by the Health Ministry yesterday.

The awards were established in 2007 to recognise the outstanding work of clinicians, researchers and educators.

The SiDRP team, led by Assistant Professor Gavin Tan and Clinical Associate Professor Wong Hon Tym, comprise members from the National Healthcare Group Eye Institute and Singapore National Eye Centre.

Prof Wong said: "We are very proud that we are able to transform the job roles of our allied health professionals and other eye

care colleagues.

"To have them taking on clinical roles, which is a huge responsibility, and to have them continue to perform at a very high level of accuracy and reliability is something we are particularly proud of."

Other healthcare professionals lauded included Associate Professor Tan Boon Yeow of St Luke's Hospital, who clinched the National Outstanding Clinician Educator Award for his contributions to education in family medicine.

Prof Tan, who is chief executive and a senior consultant at St Luke's Hospital, helped set up the first family medicine residency programme in the National University Health System.

Prof Tan said the award is a validation for family medicine, especially given that it has always been seen as the "poor cousin of the specialists".

"To me, it's an acknowledgment that the work that we are doing is valuable to the healthcare system."

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