

Satellite clinic for geriatric care to open at Queenstown Polyclinic

Jolene Ang

Elderly care will be more accessible by December when Alexandra Hospital opens its first satellite clinic for geriatrics at Queenstown Polyclinic.

Visits to the satellite clinic will be on a referral basis, meaning that patients should first see a general practitioner (GP) at the polyclinic.

It will charge lower fees than those at specialist clinics, and provide one-stop geriatric assessment and management for conditions such as dementia, frailty and malnutrition, it was announced on Sunday.

The hospital said in a statement that about a third of people above the age of 60 in Singapore have had repeated falls. The number of frail patients has also increased by 35.5 per cent, from 36,208 in 2010 to 49,092 in 2017.

Speaking at a community outreach event in Tanglin Halt on Sunday, Alexandra Hospital chief execu-

tive Jason Phua said it is important to ensure early comprehensive geriatric care in order to reduce downstream complications such as falls.

No-show rates by people who were referred by polyclinics and GPs to hospital clinics can be as high as 30 per cent, especially for those living in one-room or rental units, Dr Phua said.

Alexandra Hospital said it will coordinate with primary care and community partners to identify two to three more heartland locations for satellite clinics in the next three years, so as to make geriatric medicine and care more accessible.

Separately, Alexandra Hospital is set to open two smart wards in the first half of next year, which will allow for the deployment of assistive devices, robotics and artificial intelligence with predictive capability.

The Land Transport Authority has also given approval for a free hospital-to-hospital shuttle bus to ply a route between the National University Hospital (NUH) emer-

gency department and Alexandra Hospital's 24/7 Urgent Care Centre, from Mondays to Fridays.

Both hospitals belong to the same healthcare cluster, and doctors shuttle between them. About half of Alexandra Hospital's admissions come in via transfers from NUH's emergency department.

Dr Phua also shared results of an "Integrated General Hospital" pilot care model, under which patients are cared for by a single care team with minimal transfers during their inpatient stay.

The pilot study, which started in June last year, showed positive outcomes. For example, about a third of 8,424 patients have seen a reduction in appointments and visits to the hospital.

Dr Phua said: "Our results show it is possible to achieve a healthcare system where healthcare providers, as one care team, revolve around the patient and her needs."

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Ms Madeline Tan (far left), 63, gets help to manage her 86-year-old mother's chronic conditions under the "Integrated General Hospital" pilot care model. She regularly sends Madam Soh Lai Hong's blood pressure and diabetes readings to Alexandra Hospital's Advanced Practice Nurse Lee Siew Hui.
PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO