

## MEDIA RELEASE

14 October 2022

### **KHOO TECK PUAT – NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CHILDREN’S MEDICAL INSTITUTE CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF ADVANCING CHILD HEALTH**

***A new paediatrics programme will be launched in 2023 to strengthen support for children from low-income families and promote preventive health and early intervention***

Singapore — The Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI) at the National University Hospital (NUH) celebrates 60 years of advancing child health at a tribute event on 14 October 2022. The event is graced by Minister for Health, Mr Ong Ye Kung, and will see past and present staff of KTP-NUCMI, key partners, donors and patients come together with the leadership of the National University Health System (NUHS) and Trustees of the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat to celebrate the rich heritage, achievements and inspiring people and patients of KTP-NUCMI.

As part of the continuing efforts by KTP-NUCMI to enhance maternal and child health, it will be introducing HEADS-UPP, also known as HEALth and Development SUpport in Preschool Partnerships, in 2023. This programme will be supported by the Ministry of Health’s Child and Maternal Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan as a community-based, preventive paediatrics health programme that provides health and development screening and support for low-income families.

HEADS-UPP originated from a pilot partnership between NUH and Circle of Care (NUH-CoC) in 2017<sup>1</sup>, to build a strong ecological support system around children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The HEADS-UPP model combines social work and high-quality preschool education with health in a multidisciplinary team approach, and works closely with parents and the community.

The pilot NUH-CoC programme trialled a targeted and integrated model of bringing preventive paediatric care to children from low-income families, moving upstream to screen, detect and provide health services and health education to children and their parents. The pilot phase had a 100 per cent reach to children within the preschool setting, and helped to identify priority health areas for potential intervention and attention within these families.

HEADS-UPP will continue its health-social-education partnership with Care Corner and preschools to provide integrated and accessible reach to children in need, and to demonstrate the multiplier effects of partnering across health, social and education domains to provide holistic support for them. The programme will be enhanced with multiple components that focus on child health including: -

---

<sup>1</sup> Circle of Care is a ground-up community initiative in Singapore started by social service agency Care Corner and philanthropic organisation Lien Foundation to build a strong ecological support system around children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Maternal mental health assessment and support
- A tiered screening process for identifying children at health and developmental risks
- Tele-dentistry to improve dental health and access to dental professionals
- Health education and resources for preschool teachers, social workers and parents through the OneNUHS paediatric chatbot
- Enhanced nursing community roles within child health programmes
- New partnerships with agencies such as the Health Promotion Board for the Healthy Living Passport programme, National Library Board for donations of book and toy kits to children, as well as the Ministry of Social and Family Development on a healthy recipe book in collaboration with low-income families, medical students and endorsed by NUH dietitians

HEADS-UPP intends to reach 200 to 300 children in preschools over the next two to three years. As part of the process of co-designing the programme, social workers and preschool teachers will have enhanced capacity to adopt a health lens in helping with the children's holistic development and understand the common health conditions which can affect them. They will work with a multidisciplinary team including doctors, nurses, dentists and healthcare staff to ensure follow-up of the children's conditions, and have direct access to health teams for children with needs.

### **Strengthening child health over six decades**

The Department of Paediatrics was first established in 1962. Sixty years on, the paediatric arm of NUH provides comprehensive and specialised medical and surgical services for newborns, children and adolescents, and highlight novel achievements in translational research and clinical excellence that have shaped the landscape of paediatrics in Singapore. It would also become the only hospital in Singapore that offers paediatric liver and kidney transplant programmes, as well as the paediatric kidney dialysis programme.

Now known as KTP-NUCMI after the generous transformational gift from the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat, the paediatric arm comprises the departments of Paediatrics, Paediatric Surgery and Neonatology.

The work of KTP-NUCMI in advancing paediatric education, research and clinical care is built on the groundwork laid by the first Professor of Paediatrics and the department's founding father Emeritus Professor Wong Hock Boon. Affectionately known as the Father of modern Paediatrics in Singapore, Emeritus Professor Wong worked tirelessly to elevate the standards of child health and paediatric care in the country and has been a role model for generations of paediatricians, including clinicians who are at KTP-NUCMI today.

From performing Singapore's first successful paediatric bone marrow transplant to the first gene treatment of spinal muscular atrophy in an infant, KTP-NUCMI has offered its expertise and care to a range of patients, many of whom have overcome adversity and their chronic conditions to lead purposeful lives. These stories are featured in a commemorative book that will be launched at the 60th anniversary event.

Professor Lee Yung Seng, Head of KTP-NUCMI, said, "Paediatrics in Singapore has come a long way since the early days and for us as KTP-NUCMI, it has been an exciting journey of 60 years in improving paediatric care in the country and the region. Six decades on, equipped

with our world-class clinical programmes, cutting-edge research and technology, and excellent training and education, we have grown into a comprehensive and leading paediatric tertiary centre at the forefront of medicine. Caring for patients extends beyond the hospital into the community, with two child development clinics, a children’s urgent care clinic, and a homecare programme for children with complex medical conditions. The growth of KTP-NUCMI would not have been possible without the dedication of selfless individuals who provided incredible care for their patients.”

### Chinese Glossary

National University Health System (NUHS)	国立大学医学组织 (国大医学组织)
National University Hospital (NUH)	国立大学医院 (国大医院)
Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI)	邱德拔-国立大学儿童医疗中心
Professor Lee Yung Seng Head, Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute, National University Hospital	李湧兴教授 总主任, 国大医院邱德拔-国立大学儿童医疗中心

For media enquiries, please contact:

Justine Lai  
Group Communications  
National University Health System  
HP: +65 97380669  
Email: [justine\\_lai@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:justine_lai@nuhs.edu.sg)

Rachel Tan  
Group Communications  
National University Health System  
HP: +65 90738620  
Email: [Rachel\\_YP\\_TAN@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:Rachel_YP_TAN@nuhs.edu.sg)

### **About the National University Hospital (NUH)**

The National University Hospital is a tertiary hospital and major referral centre with over 50 medical, surgical and dental specialties, offering a comprehensive suite of specialist care for adults, women and children. It is the only public hospital in Singapore to offer a paediatric kidney and liver transplant programme, in addition to kidney, liver and pancreas transplantation for adults.

The hospital was opened on 24 June 1985 as Singapore’s first restructured hospital. Each year, the Hospital attends to more than one million patients.

As an academic health institution, patient safety and good clinical outcomes are the focus of the Hospital. It plays a key role in the training of doctors, nurses, allied health and other healthcare professionals. Translational research is pivotal in the Hospital’s three-pronged focus, and paves the way for new cures and treatment.

A member of the National University Health System, it is the principal teaching hospital of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and the NUS Faculty of Dentistry.

### **About the National University Health System (NUHS)**

The National University Health System (NUHS) aims to transform how illness is prevented and managed by discovering causes of disease, development of more effective treatments through collaborative multidisciplinary research and clinical trials, and creation of better technologies and care delivery systems in partnership with others who share the same values and vision.

Institutions in the NUHS Group include the National University Hospital, Ng Teng Fong General Hospital, Jurong Community Hospital and Alexandra Hospital; three National Specialty Centres - National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS), National University Heart Centre, Singapore (NUHCS) and National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore (NUCOHS); the National University Polyclinics (NUP); Jurong Medical Centre; and three NUS health sciences schools – NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (including the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies), NUS Faculty of Dentistry and NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

With member institutions under a common governance structure, NUHS creates synergies for the advancement of health by integrating patient care, health science education and biomedical research.

As a Regional Health System, NUHS works closely with health and social care partners across Singapore to develop and implement programmes that contribute to a healthy and engaged population in the Western part of Singapore.

For more information, please visit <http://www.nuhs.edu.sg>.

**Celebrating Our Patients and Growing with Them Over the Decades**

*“It takes a village to raise a child. Where there was no hope, we persevered to push boundaries in order to make a difference in the lives of our patients and their families.”*

*– Professor Lee Yung Seng, Head of KTP-NUCMI, NUH*

**Alexis Teo**



*Alexis Teo, 2, with parents Mr Justin Teo and Mdm Koay Yih Chwin.*

**Alexis Teo**, 2, was born premature at 26 weeks of gestation and developed bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD), a condition where her under-developed lungs were damaged. She required support from a ventilator, and her BPD was later also complicated by pulmonary hypertension. This meant that the blood vessels in her lungs were under high pressure due to narrowed blood vessels, and as a result, carried less oxygen. Alexis’s parents were faced with the difficult decision of a tracheostomy procedure, or to have her on a long-term endotracheal tube or nasal cannula.

Associate Professor Zubair Amin, Head and Senior Consultant, Department of Neonatology, KTP-NUCMI, NUH, supported them through this journey, moderating the views of different consultants, addressing their doubts and concerns – even going the extra mile to join them in a teleconference with a specialist in the United States. Alexis’s parents also received guidance through family conferences that involved doctors, nurses and respiratory therapists. After opting for the tracheostomy, the nursing teams at the ICUs were there to keep Alexis comfortable after the procedure and during recovery. One year later, Alexis is healing well. She is able to breathe unsupported by the ventilator for most of the day, and is hitting her milestones from sitting to taking her first steps, and from babbling to identifying shapes.

**Qistina Aisha**



*Qistina Aisha with her younger brother and parents Mr Ashiq Osman and Mdm Anwin Samsudi.*

**Qistina Aisha**, 13, was born with pulmonary artery atresia, a potentially lethal congenital heart defect where the valve controlling blood flow from the heart to the lungs is not formed. As a result, she had stents implanted in her heart to help with blood flow at three and twelve months old, and went through her first open-heart surgery at three years old. A second open-heart surgery was done last November by Associate Professor Laszlo Kiraly, Assistant Professor Winn Maung Maung Aye, and Dr Senthil Kumar from the Department of Cardiac, Thoracic and Vascular Surgery, National University Heart Centre, Singapore, after several angioplasty procedures to enlarge the blood vessels as she got older and bigger.

In addition to the cardiac surgeons, Aisha has also been under the care of other doctors over the years, including Dr Yvonne Ng, Senior Consultant in the Department of Neonatology, who oversaw her care when she was in the neonatal intensive care unit and when she came back to the hospital for outpatient visits, and Dr Terence Lim, Senior Consultant at the Division of Paediatric Cardiology, who has been her primary doctor charting her progress and assessing her medical needs from birth. The doctors reassured her parents with information and were open about what to expect, which made it easier for them and alleviated some of their fears. Throughout the years, Aisha was able to do things like other children her age. She even participated in the SG50 Jubilee Big Walk at six years old, and now at 13, she enjoys her physical education lessons and Girl Guides activities in school.

**Dr Mark Goh**



For **Dr Mark Goh**, 30, NUH feels like a second home – a place he had been familiar with since he was 13 years old after being diagnosed with nephrotic syndrome due to focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS). FSGS is a rare condition where scar tissue grows on the kidneys and prevents them from filtering waste from the blood. The body begins to swell from severe leakage of protein in the urine, and this is known as nephrotic syndrome. As such, Dr Goh needed to undergo peritoneal dialysis, a procedure that helped remove waste products from his blood using a fluid that flowed through a tube into his abdomen. He eventually received a kidney transplant from his mother when he was 20 years old.

“I’ve known some of the doctors and nurses since I was 13. Going for my appointments at NUH was like meeting my friends and family,” he said. But one doctor had a particularly significant impact on him: his primary doctor, Professor Yap Hui Kim, Head and Emeritus Consultant at the Division of Paediatric Nephrology, Dialysis and Renal Transplantation. Beyond treating him, Prof Yap encouraged Mr Goh to be more involved in the kidney patient community, and he later led and organised stay-in camps for young kidney patients. He felt that the experience helped built his self-confidence. “I am the person I am today with much thanks to Prof Yap,” he said. Now, at 30 years old, Dr Goh is a resident at the Department of Paediatrics in KTP-NUCMI, NUH.