



Developments in Pilot Models of Primary Care

— *Community Health Centres*

By Agency for Integrated Care

With an ageing population compounded by the burden of chronic disease, the primary care sector needs to evolve to better prepare for this impending demand on primary care services. There is a need to tap on the private primary care sector to deliver care to some of these patients, especially in the area of chronic disease management. In 2012, the Ministry of Health (MOH) enhanced the Community Health Assist Scheme, which enabled more Singaporeans to enjoy subsidies for medical and dental treatments in the private primary care sector. However, providing subsidies for private primary care is just one part of an integrated plan to build up the primary care sector to meet imminent challenges.

In late 2011, MOH launched its Primary Care Masterplan to transform the primary care sector. Community Health Centres (CHCs) are one of the new models of care with ancillary support, that provide support to the private primary care sector to better manage patients with chronic diseases. The first CHC was set up in Tampines in 2010, and it currently provides diabetic retinal photography (DRP), diabetic foot screening (DFS), and nurse counselling in its premises. In collaboration with an adjacent physiotherapy centre, operated by the Society for the Physically Disabled, the Tampines CHC also functions as a coordination point for patients who are cared for by GPs and require therapy as well. In all, the CHC acts as a one-stop centre for GP-

managed patients who require nursing and allied health services for management of chronic conditions.

CHCs will be staffed by nurses and allied health professionals, and there will be no doctors stationed in these centres. Doctors will refer patients to CHCs for tests and services, such as DRP, DFS, nurse education, podiatry services, and physiotherapy services, to support the patients in the community. CHCs will be situated at void decks within neighbourhoods to allow greater access by patients, and closely located to GPs for better coordination of care. As more CHCs are set up, the service providers will engage GPs in the vicinity to fine-tune the services that are needed to manage their patients. There are plans to explore an electronic referral system that can be easily interfaced with GPs' current clinic management systems, so that appointments can be made seamlessly from the clinics, and results can be sent back electronically.

This year, three more CHCs will open their doors in Bedok, Jurong East and Tiong Bahru, to serve the GPs and patients in these neighbourhoods. These new CHCs will provide core services such as DRP, DFS and nurse counselling. **GPs, if you are in these neighbourhoods, and would like to find out more about the CHCs' services, and work with the service providers to deliver better chronic disease care to your patients, please drop us an email at gp@aic.sg. SMA**

Photos: Agency for Integrated Care