



Greater Support for MENTAL HEALTH

Enhancing GPs' management of patients with mental health conditions

General Practitioners (GPs) play a pivotal role in fulfilling patients' care needs as they are the first healthcare touchpoint in the community. With 14.3% of adults¹ with chronic conditions also having a mental disorder, the need for better holistic care has risen in Singapore's primary care setting. As such, over the past 10 years, mental healthcare has shown great development within the primary care landscape. Availability of allied health support has also increased to complement the quality and accessibility of clinical care rendered by GPs.

Mental Health GP Partnership Programme

This programme partners GPs who are keen to manage patients with mild to moderate mental health conditions. To encourage continuous learning and upskilling, partnering Restructured Hospitals also conduct regular mental health related Continuing Medical Education (CME) talks and case discussions for GPs. In addition, GPs are offered a single contact point for case coordination to facilitate patient referrals and access more affordable psychiatric drugs.

Community Intervention Team (COMIT)

COMIT is an allied health-led community team comprising of counsellors, psychologists and nurses. They support GPs in the long-term management of patients' recovery through psychosocial therapeutic interventions, case management and caregiver support.

These are part of the efforts to make mental health care services more accessible, enabling patients to live well at home and in the community.

GP and COMIT in Action:

When Sally² approached her regular GP, Dr Mark Yap, for prolonged low mood and negative feelings, it was his familiarity with mental health issues that enabled quick diagnosis and treatment of her depression. Dr Yap, who is on the Mental Health GP Partnership Programme, prescribed anti-depressants and provided psycho-education to Sally and her family. He also recommended her for further support by Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)'s COMIT for counselling and therapeutic activities. Sally benefitted from allied health-led community support; in this case, teaching her coping strategies and using drama to better express her emotions. With support from Dr Yap, SAMH's COMIT and her family, Sally's condition has improved remarkably. She is now happier and more positive and continues to see Dr Yap once every three to six months.

1. Chong, SA., E. Abidin, L. Nan et al. "Prevalence and impact of mental and physical comorbidity in the adult Singapore population." *Ann Acad Med Singapore* 41, no. 3 (2012): 105-14.

2. Patient's name has been changed to preserve confidentiality.



Singapore
Mental Health
Conference

2017

GPs interested in learning more about mental health as part of primary care services can register for the upcoming conference. One of the breakout sessions will discuss the topic of "Strengthening Primary Care", showcase accessibility in mental health support and demonstrate how GPs can play an active role in providing mental health care.

**9 September 2017
12.30-4.30 pm
Singapore Expo, Max Atria**

**Here are the speakers for the topic
"Strengthening Primary Care":**



**Dr Alvin Lum,
Family Physician, Shenton Family
Medical Clinic (Bukit Gombak)**

*Mental Health Partnership: Sharing of
a 10-year Journey and Beyond*



**Mr Pathma Thanapallam,
Senior Caseworker, Singapore
Association for Mental Health**

*Community Intervention Team (COMIT),
Collaboration with General Practitioners
for Holistic Care*



**Dr Winnie Soon,
Family Physician, Consultant,
National Healthcare Group Polyclinics**

*An Integrated Approach –
Mental Health in Primary Care*

**To register for Singapore Mental
Health Conference or to learn
more about the various mental
health programmes, contact AIC
at gp@aic.sg or 6632 1199.**