

COMIT to Care

Partnering GPs for Accessible Mental Health in Primary Care

by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)



For many GPs, the struggle is a familiar one: you find that your patient could do with additional support for their mental health needs, but they hesitate at the mention of specialist referral.

Through the GP-COMIT partnership, referring patients with mild-to-moderate depression or anxiety no longer means facing long waitlists, high costs, or the stigma of a psychiatric clinic. This partnership aims to make the process seamless and practical, keeping mental health support within the trusted space of primary care.

Breaking Barriers, One Referral at a Time

Since August 2024, AIC has been pairing all Healthier SG GP clinics with a Community Intervention Team (COMIT) within their vicinity. More than just another referral channel, this model brings psychological support into the comfort of primary care.

A COMIT team is made up of qualified care professionals who are trained to provide mental health assessments, counselling, psychotherapy and psychosocial support to individuals aged 18 and above. Run by social service agencies, the services are fully government funded, eliminating patient cost concerns, while their community-based setup helps reduce stigma.

With a simple referral, often just a quick email, you can connect patients with mild-to-moderate mental health conditions to support within days.

Proof from the Ground

To gain deeper insights into the GP-COMIT partnership, AIC facilitated a pilot engagement involving nine GPs and their COMIT partners. Over a three-month period, the nine GP-COMIT teams co-developed and tested workflows, clarified expectations and explored preferred referral methods.

The pilot also revealed several key insights on the management of mental health in the primary care setting and the impact of this partnership:

- Depression and anxiety were the more common mental health conditions seen at GP clinics.
- 16% of patients with mental health concerns seen by GPs were referred to COMIT.
- Email was the preferred mode of referral to COMIT among GPs.
- Referral decisions were influenced by patient preferences, clinical needs and perceived capabilities of COMIT.
- GPs appreciated the regular COMIT updates, which allowed them to stay connected to patient progress and care plans.

Hear from a fellow GP

"As the first point of contact, we as GPs are well-positioned to identify early signs, provide ongoing medical support, and coordinate care for patients with mental health conditions.

By working closely with COMIT, we can ensure timely referrals, shared care planning, and continuity of treatment, leading to more effective, person-centred outcomes."

— Dr Tan C Y, GP

A Cornerstone for New Care Protocols

This model is especially significant as Singapore prepares for the 2026 rollout of Healthier SG Care Protocols for Major Depressive Disorder and Generalised Anxiety Disorder.

The protocols designate the partnering COMIT as your "paired COMIT", enabling GPs to refer patients for mild-to-moderate depression and

anxiety co-management, adjustment issues and stress-related concerns.

Your paired COMIT can support you by:

- providing non-pharmacological interventions alongside your clinical management,
- administering standardised scales like the PHQ-9 (Depression Questionnaire) and GAD-7 (Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7-item Scale), and
- offering case management support and onward referrals when social issues warrant additional support.

This collaborative approach aligns with the Tiered Care Model for Mental Health, which positions GP-COMIT partnerships primarily within Tier 3 (Moderate Intensity Services) while maintaining clear pathways to step patients up or down based on their clinical needs.

Looking Ahead

The integration of mental health into primary care under Healthier SG represents a pivotal shift in Singapore's healthcare landscape. Central to this evolution is recognising that GPs, when supported by structured partnerships with COMIT, can play a transformative role in community mental health.

Each partnership represents an opportunity to break down barriers that prevent patients from accessing mental health support. With every referral, conversation and collaboration, we move one step closer to a truly integrated model.

Checklist for GPs

☒ **Work with Your COMIT Partner**

- **Identify** your nearby COMIT partner.
- **Prepare a memo for your patient** to bring during their visit to COMIT or send a referral via email to CareInMind (careinmind@aic.sg) if preferred.



COMIT Partner List

☒ **Watch for webinar invitations on the new Care Protocols,** covering both clinical and administrative requirements.

What is the Tiered Care Model?

Launched in October 2023, the model organises mental health services across four tiers based on severity of patient's mental health needs and the intensity of interventions required.

Tier	Client Profile	Types of Interventions
1 	• Healthy • Coping well • No or minimal symptoms of mental health conditions	Mental well-being promotion through digital self-help platforms, community support groups and others
2 	• Low mental health needs • Have some difficulties coping • Display mild symptoms	Low intensity services • Mental health needs detection • Interventions to facilitate coping and prevent escalation of symptoms
3 	• Moderate mental health needs • Have difficulties coping • Display moderate symptoms	Moderate intensity services • Mental health assessment • Interventions to reduce severity of symptoms, e.g. psychotherapy, medical treatment
4 	• High mental health needs • Have major difficulties coping • Display severe symptoms	High intensity services • Psychiatric assessment and diagnosis • Specialised and longer-term psychological interventions • Medical treatment • Emergency services

☒ **Tap on the Right Tools**

Review the latest Care Protocols and ACE Clinical Guidelines on:



Major Depressive Disorder



Generalised Anxiety Disorder

☒ **Stay informed** via email invites and updates on Primary Care Pages.