

Opportunities for Exploration: Bringing Care to Patients Outside the Hospital

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On 8 November 2024, Changi General Hospital's (CGH) Orthopaedic Surgery Department partnered with Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS) for a community outreach event at Gardens by the Bay. The initiative brought together medical professionals and children with cerebral palsy for a day of meaningful connection outside the hospital.

The birth prevalence of cerebral palsy is estimated to be 1.4 to 2.2 per 1,000 in high income countries. This condition is found to result from early childhood brain damage, leading to symptoms ranging from permanent movement disorders to intellectual disabilities. Many of these children face daily challenges such as mobility limitations and communication barriers. Families of the affected are likewise involved in continuous medical and therapy follow-ups.

CPAS was established in 1957 with the vision of empowering those affected with cerebral palsy or multiple disabilities to realise their full potential, as well as lead fulfilled and dignified lives. CPAS currently serves over 800 clients, ranging in age from infancy to 55 years, through the provision of early intervention, special education, rehabilitation and vocational training services.

Against the backdrop of the iconic Supertrees and lush gardens, volunteers from CGH as well as children and members of CPAS enjoyed an exciting day of interaction. The event began with members from both sides being paired up and getting acquainted before embarking on a route which brought them through the Flower Dome and Cloud Forest. The fun-filled day concluded with a delicious meal together at the Jurassic Nest Foodhall.

The event, partially sponsored by Dr Low Boon Yong, Emeritus Consultant at CGH Orthopaedic Surgery, was first conceived as a way to extend care to patients beyond the scope of clinical practice. It created profound moments of joy while reinforcing the belief that every child deserves opportunities for exploration regardless of their physical limitations. Dr Andy Yeo, Head of CGH Orthopaedic Surgery, emphasised that similar outreach programmes could be implemented across other hospital departments. "We hope this will spark thinking about how we can give back to the community beyond providing clinical care," he reflected.

The department plans to make this a regular event, with the next outing scheduled for 2026. Other means of community outreach in the works include planning for roadshows for degenerative conditions such as osteoarthritis, which is gaining relevance due to Singapore's ageing population.



Dr Joseph and his new friend exploring Gardens by the Bay

This initiative showcased how simple, thoughtful gestures can transform lives. By breaking the routine of hospital visits, both patients and clinicians experienced a day filled with laughter and sensory exploration. As healthcare evolves, initiatives such as these remind us that healing happens beyond hospital walls – as doctors, we treat people, not just conditions. Through empathy and understanding, medical professionals can create experiences that acknowledge the whole person, emphasising the critical importance of emotional and social support in comprehensive patient care. ♦

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Volunteers from CGH Orthopaedic Surgery enjoying a day out with CPAS clients and members

Dr Koh is currently an orthopaedic surgery resident with Singapore Health Services. He enjoys organising and participating in community outreach programmes in his free time.

