

CARING FOR THE MIND

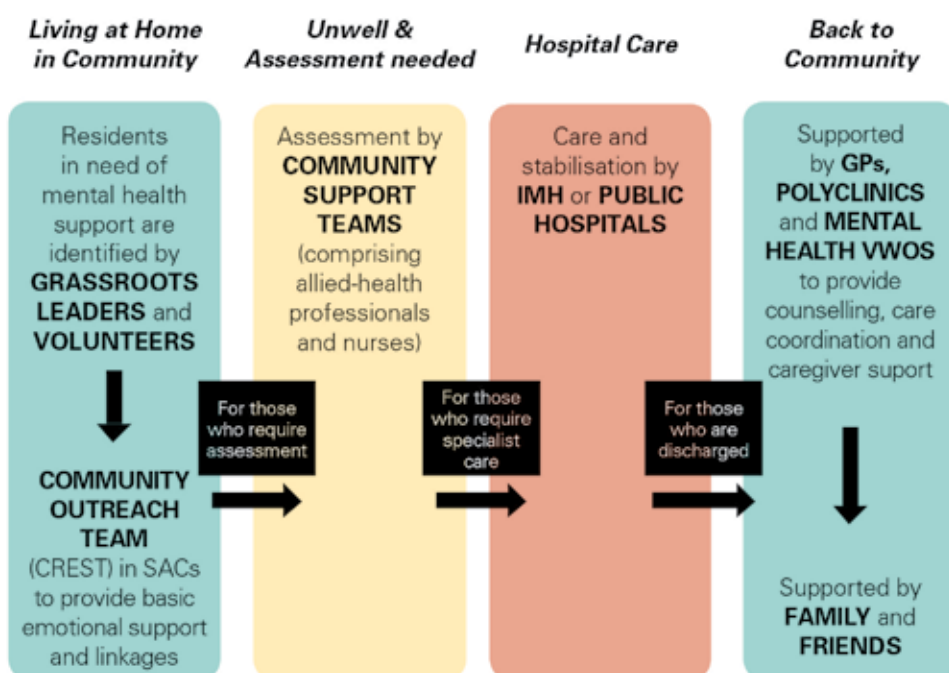
IMAGES AND INTERVIEW BY EASTERN HEALTH ALLIANCE

Depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and dementia — these are common mental health conditions affecting Singaporeans. For instance, one in 17 people has suffered from a major depressive disorder at some point in their lifetime. The majority of such affected people do not receive the help they need.

Early therapeutic intervention empowers clients in managing their conditions, offering them and their families a better quality of life. As general practitioners (GPs) are often the first line of support for clients with mental health conditions, the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) aims to enhance the GPs' capability in caring for new and/or existing clients with mental health conditions in the community through its Integrated Mental Health and Dementia Network.

The network facilitates the collaboration between primary care providers such as hospitals, polyclinics and GPs, and community partners, namely allied health professionals, so that clients with mental health conditions can be managed holistically within the community instead of in different care settings. Patients can thus enjoy quick and easy access to specialised care and mental health support services closer to home.

MEETING COMMUNITIES' NEEDS BY INTEGRATED NETWORK



One-access point by AIC (Singapore Silver Line 1800 650 6060, careinmind@aic.sg)

Currently, the network includes allied health-led teams and physician-led teams (psychiatrist or GDMP trained family physician) to provide intermediate intervention for those with mild and moderate mental health conditions.

Clients with mental health conditions often have additional requirements that GPs may not be able to address fully, and this is where allied health-led teams and physician-led teams can lighten GPs' loads. "I can quickly refer a patient with mental illness to an allied health-led team for more specialised care. This reduces the extended consultation time that clients with mental health conditions typically require," said Dr Kwek Thiam Soo of Bukit Batok Medical Clinic.

With GPs, allied health-led teams and physician-led teams working hand in hand to serve in the community, clients with mental health conditions will certainly have an easier time finding their footing.

Over the past year, I referred patients to the Eastern Community Health Centre's (CHC) Health Wellness Programme when they have trouble coping with stress, retirement, grief, insomnia, relationship problems and serious illnesses like cancer.

MAINTAINING THE BALANCE

Dr Henry Yeo, GP at Bedok Medical Centre, shares how he helps his patients manage both their physical and mental health, with the support of community allied health services.

Being in this field for 39 years, can you share some of your views about practising family medicine and managing mental health conditions?

I realised that with every health condition there is always an emotional

and psychological component. The ability to understand those needs is essential to manage the patients and help them comply with treatment especially in managing chronic conditions. In my practice, I see many patients with anxiety and with psychosomatic problems. However, for those with more severe conditions like psychosis, I refer them to my psychiatric colleagues in the hospital or specialist outpatient clinic.

What have you found useful in helping patients with mental health conditions?

Over the past year, I referred

patients to the Eastern Community Health Centre's (CHC) Health Wellness Programme (HWP) when they have trouble coping with stress, retirement, grief, insomnia, relationship problems and serious illnesses like cancer.

My patients find the neighbourhood location of the CHC very convenient as some of them worry about the stigma of going to the hospital psychological department for treatment. Many of them have found the HWP counselling session useful and opted for further individual follow-up sessions.

ABOUT COMMUNITY INTERVENTION TEAM AND ASSESSMENT & SHARED CARE TEAM

Clients with mental health conditions can be referred either to an allied health-led community intervention team, or a physician-led assessment and shared care team. Each team comprises counsellors, occupational therapists, psychologists, nurses and programme coordinators, who can:

- Perform assessments of clients and caregivers
- Provide counselling and other psycho-social therapy for clients and caregivers
- Develop individualised intervention plans for clients and monitor them, with appropriate referrals for GP or hospital follow-up, or social services
- Follow up closely with clients and caregivers through home visits
 - Provide care coordination for clients to ensure appropriate integration, coordination and right-siting of care
- Train caregivers in managing and caring for their loved ones so as to reduce caregiver stress or burnout

If you have clients requiring counselling or psychotherapy, you can refer them to their nearest allied health-led team or physician-led team.

Area	Service Provider
North	Physician-led team@North THRIVE (Khoo Teck Puat Hospital) Hotline: 6555 8828
	Allied health-led teams: O'Joy Care Services Hotline: 6749 0190 Clarity Singapore Hotline: 6757 7990
East	Allied health-led team: Eastern CHC (Bedok South) Health Wellness Programme Hotline: 6449 5419
Central	Physician-led team @Central (Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic) Hotline: 6355 3000
	Allied health-led team: O'Joy Care Services Hotline: 6749 0190

SMS & WIN!

Enjoyed the article? Receive a 2GB thumb drive/stylus pen by sharing your experience/feedback with us if you have referred patients to any of the physician-led/allied health-led teams.

SMS your experience/feedback to **9125 4665**, together with your name and MCR number by 15 June 2015! The first 50 to SMS us will receive the pen.