



# A PURPOSEFUL AND FUN-FILLED DAY

## COMBINED EFFORT FOR HOSPICE PATIENTS

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The Lunar New Year may have come and gone, but for patients at the HCA Day Hospice Centre, the fun and festivities continued as students from all three local medical schools – Duke-NUS Medical School (Duke-NUS), Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCmedicine) and NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine – paid a visit on 6 March 2018. The students spent an afternoon with the patients, baking pineapple tarts and making handcrafted cards together.

### A common goal

Over the past few years, our healthcare system has evolved in many ways, including the inception of new medical schools to meet the needs of our population. This HCA Day Hospice event was special as it was the first, but certainly not the last, community service collaboration between the three medical schools. This initiative started when the three schools'

community service directors met up and agreed that there should be more opportunities for medical students to serve the community while getting to know our future colleagues better.

As it stands, there are many different projects running across the three schools, from health screening projects to those that target migrant workers, people with special needs, the elderly and the terminally ill. We wanted to kick-start with an event that was not too intensive, so that it could be an enjoyable way for the students to meet one another while doing something in line with the festive season for the community.

Thus, when HCA Hospice Care (HCA) offered us the opportunity to set up an afternoon of activities at their day hospice centre, we readily accepted.

HCA is a home hospice programme in Singapore that provides care for palliative patients who have prognoses

of six to 12 months. Patients receive care via both the home and day hospices, which offer singing and music therapies, free haircuts, art and crafts, pet therapies, physiotherapies and outings.

On the event day, 27 of us headed to HCA Day Hospice Centre to set up the two stations for the day's activities. Each patient was then paired up with a student buddy for the day.

### Engaging activities

Soon, the patients were all gloved up to roll their own homemade pineapple tarts which were baked on the spot and could be brought home to share with their families. Although it was a simple process of wrapping each ball of pineapple tart filling with a disk of pastry dough, many of them took the opportunity to get creative and have fun. Some included sesame seed decorations

**"Making pineapple tarts and scrapbooking with the patients at the HCA Day Hospice Centre was a fun and meaningful experience for me. The patient with whom I was partnered told me that he doesn't usually do much, so I'm happy that we managed to bring some joy and excitement to these patients' lives. I was especially touched when the patients applauded us at the end of the activity. It was also heartening to see how the dedicated staff at the Centre had established great rapport with the patients and even knew their individual mannerisms by heart. Additionally, it was a good opportunity for us to interact with our future colleagues from other medical schools."** – Justin Lim, M1, LKCmedicine



to “mark out” their exact tarts, while others experimented with different shapes, including 3D animal designs. It was certainly heart-warming to see some of the physically disabled patients engage in this activity with a bit of aid. One of them even mastered rolling pineapple tarts with one hand!

While the pineapple tarts were in the oven, the patients got started on scrapbook making and calligraphy. On top of providing art materials, we also took Polaroid photos of them with their friends, both old and new, as mementos of the day. A student from LKCMedicine conducted the calligraphy lesson. In fact, even the student volunteers expressed their interest in learning from her as well. The day’s activities ended just in time for an afternoon tea break of hot drinks and fresh pineapple tarts.

The healthcare landscape is changing, and as we shift from a hospital-centric to a community-based model of care, our community service projects must also adapt to remain

relevant and innovative. Moving forward, we will make a greater push to integrate students across the different healthcare-related faculties in our various projects, encouraging inter-professional partnerships from an early stage of their career, even as they give back to society. ◆



Since our inception in 2013, SMA Charity Fund has been actively engaging various stakeholders through four strategic initiatives: providing financial assistance to needy medical students through the SMA Medical Students’ Assistance Fund (SMA-MSAF), advocating volunteerism by promoting and supporting meaningful student-led healthcare projects, supporting learning exposure by sponsoring underprivileged students for overseas learning conferences, and recognising mentorship by acknowledging exemplary medical educators.

#### Legend

1. Justin and his buddy with the cards they made and the Polaroid they took together
2. Nicole, medical student from Duke-NUS, working with two of her newfound friends as they roll the dough to the right size for baking!
3. The student volunteers who took the afternoon off to be with the patients at HCA Hospice Day Activity Centre

Si Qi and Joshua are medical students and heads of Community Service programmes at Duke-NUS Medical School and Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, respectively.

