



EQUIPPING PROFESSIONALS AND PROVIDERS

The Ministry of Health (MOH) will continue to nurture the capabilities of our healthcare workforce, help them advance in their careers through multiple progression pathways, and push for productivity and innovation. MOH will also update regulations to support providers to deliver better care and value to patients.

Developing More Career Opportunities and Pathways in Healthcare

2. The growing healthcare sector will create meaningful job opportunities for Singaporeans. Over the last five years, nursing intakes have increased by around 500 students, from 1,600 in 2013 to over 2,100 students in 2018, the highest intake to date. Intakes of the four Allied Health degree programmes in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Diagnostic Radiography and Radiation Therapy have increased from their inaugural intake of 230 in 2016 to about 300 students in 2018. The intake for Medicine has also increased significantly from more than 300 in 2010 to about 500 in 2018. We expect our need to recruit overseas-trained locals to moderate and stabilise in the coming years.

3. We are also ramping up recruitment of mid-career professionals to complement the increased intakes of fresh school leavers, in view of falling student cohort sizes. The Healthcare Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) aim to attract and assist mid-career Singaporeans in making the switch to healthcare. Since 2003, close to 1,500 mid-career locals have participated in the Healthcare PCPs, of whom around 1,200 were in nursing and close to 300 were in allied health professions.

4. This year, MOH has introduced an Accelerated PCP for Physiotherapists. With a training duration of less than three years, this PCP allows trainees with a prior honours degree in a science-related field to complete their training in a shorter period of time compared to the current four-year programme.

Shortened training pathway for Nursing ITE Upgraders

5. MOH will continue to develop more career pathways for healthcare professionals. A new, accelerated progression pathway will be created by Nanyang Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic for Enrolled Nurses who did well¹ during their ITE training to progress to a Registered Nurse. Under a new 2+2 Diploma in Nursing, eligible ITE Upgraders will be able to graduate in two years with the same diploma as the three-year diploma course, instead of the current 2.5 years.

Strengthening continuing education and training through National Nursing Academy

¹ From Academic Year 2019, ITE graduates from Nitec in Nursing, Higher Nitec in Eldercare or Higher Nitec in Paramedic & Emergency Care (with Nitec in Nursing) with GPA ≥ 3.5 can be admitted to the 2-year diploma track.

6. MOH will set up the National Nursing Academy (NNA) to coordinate and support lifelong learning offerings for nurses and nursing leaders across healthcare institutions, schools and training providers. The NNA will oversee Continuing Education and Training (CET) efforts to develop future-ready nurses, and provide an online platform for them to access a comprehensive suite of courses and learning opportunities to develop the requisite skills and competencies to meet evolving healthcare needs.

7. Today, many healthcare providers have their own suite of in-house training programmes, which are often not recognised or transferable across different institutions. The NNA will accredit these workplace-based training and develop a system to recognise the skills and competencies attained by a nurse at the workplace. This will improve the cross-recognition and portability of skills, which can in turn advance nurses' careers and professional practice across healthcare institutions and settings.

8. One of the priorities of the NNA will be to define the deeper skills and competencies required for nurses' evolving roles in community nursing, starting from the development of the Community Nursing Competency Framework (CNCF). This will be completed in May 2019. The CNCF will be followed by frameworks for palliative and gerontology care in 2020.

Establishing the Skills Framework for Healthcare

9. MOH is launching the Skills Framework for Healthcare which documents the roles, associated competencies and training programmes for six professions – Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Nurses, Pharmacy Technicians and Patient Service Associates. It is jointly developed by MOH, SkillsFuture Singapore and Workforce Singapore, in collaboration with practitioners, employers, unions, professional associations, and education and training providers.

10. The Skills Framework for Healthcare serves as a common reference for skills and competencies for different stakeholders. It enables aspiring individuals to decide on career choices, aids healthcare practitioners in their professional development and skills mastery, helps employers in attraction, retention and deployment of healthcare workers, assists training providers to analyse training needs and curriculum development, and supports government agencies, professional societies and labour unions to diagnose and address skills gap. It is available online at the SkillsFuture, MySkillsFuture and MOH Healthcare Professionals portals.

Supporting Providers To Provide Better Care And Value To Patients

Healthcare Services Bill

11. With medical advancements and new and innovative care models evolving to meet the healthcare needs of Singaporeans, it is important to ensure safe and appropriate care, as well as continuity of care for patients. MOH will replace the Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Act (PHMCA) with the Healthcare Services (HCS) Bill. The HCS Bill will:

- Enhance regulatory clarity to the types of healthcare services regulated;
- Strengthen the governance of the licensees providing the healthcare services;

- Provide the necessary safeguards to patient safety and welfare; and
- Ensure proper continuity of care and accountability.

12. MOH has engaged stakeholders extensively on the proposed HCS Bill policies from August 2016 to February 2018 and received generally positive feedback. For instance, licensees currently under the PHMCA appreciated the flexibility of the new licensing approach to accommodate various care models. We have taken in feedback from the consultations where appropriate.

13. MOH targets to enact the HCS Bill in the first half of 2019, and implement it in three phases, starting from April 2020². MOH has begun seeking feedback on the draft Regulations under the Bill. Wider stakeholder consultations for the Regulations will be conducted after the Bill is passed and will be targeted at the specific sectors that the Regulations apply to, as part of MOH's commitment to continuous engagement with the healthcare community. MOH will also continue to streamline and improve our operations to ensure a smooth implementation of the Bill, while keeping regulatory cost low.

² Phase 1 (From 1 Apr 2020), existing clinical laboratories will come under the new legislation. Phase 2 (From 1 Oct 2020), PHMCA medical and dental clinics, as well as private ambulance services will come under the new legislation. Phase 3 (From 1 Apr 2021), all PHMCA-licensed hospitals and nursing homes, as well as new services such as Telemedicine services etc. will come under the new legislation.