

COS FACTSHEET: BEYOND QUALITY TO VALUE

ENSURING AN AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

1. A key priority for the Ministry of Health (MOH) is to keep the healthcare system sustainable and affordable, for this generation and future generations. We will do this through nurturing the capabilities of our healthcare workforce, pushing for productivity and innovation, updating our regulatory framework and by providing more information for better decision-making.

Nurturing a Future-Ready Healthcare Workforce

Raising capabilities in the community

2. A sustainable healthcare system needs to be underpinned by a competent, caring and committed workforce. As reflected in the Healthcare Manpower Plan 2020, we are equipping the healthcare workforce with future skills to provide better care, grow a strong Singaporean core and achieve higher productivity in healthcare.

3. MOH will invest in developing a more comprehensive Continuing and Education (CET) system for nursing training. This will include creating more pathways for skills acquisition that can stack up to higher qualifications, strengthening the system of in-employment training of nurses and building up our institutions of nursing education. We will place more emphasis on developing capabilities in the community.

4. The Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies (NUS Nursing) will be launching a new two-year Bachelor of Science (Nursing) programme. This programme will be offered under the Professional Conversion Programme for Registered Nurses (PCP-RN), a collaboration between MOH and Workforce Singapore. It will complement the existing PCP-RN training at Nanyang Polytechnic. Students under the PCP-RN will receive full course fees support, monthly training allowance and a career transition bonus upon graduation.

5. Later this year, the National University of Singapore (NUS) will introduce a new part-time and modular graduate diploma in Community Health Nursing in August 2018 to deepen the skills and knowledge of nurses in managing national population health needs in the community. The new programme allows nurses greater flexibility in pursuing part-time study while continuing to work. Nurses can obtain a graduate certificate upon completion of each module that will stack up towards a graduate diploma.

6. Good rehabilitative care is essential in helping patients return to their daily lives. Therapy assistants support therapists in the provision of rehabilitation care to clients. The work involves conducting activities, monitoring their progress and ensuring safety during rehabilitation. The Institute of Technical Education will roll out a new Work-Learn Technical Diploma in Rehabilitation Care course in April 2018. The apprenticeship-based diploma allows trainees to work and study at the same time and

will equip therapy assistants with deeper skills and knowledge to deliver treatment plans and help clients regain their functionality and return home safely.

Expanding scope of practice to support community care

7. Senior pharmacists and advanced practice nurses (APN) will be upskilled to legally prescribe medicines to patients and order tests, in a collaborative framework overseen by doctors. MOH will adjust our rules to enable experienced and qualified APNs and pharmacists in the public healthcare sector to prescribe without the need to obtain a doctor's countersignature. Collaborative Prescribing (CP) aims to increase patients' accessibility to healthcare particularly in the community while empowering our senior pharmacists and APNs to perform more advanced roles and increase workforce productivity.

8. To ensure prescribing services rendered by the nurses and pharmacists are safe and effective, MOH will put in place two levels of safeguards. Firstly, only APNs and senior pharmacists who have completed the Collaborative Prescribing Programme organised by NUS, will qualify to prescribe. Secondly, healthcare institutions offering CP services are required to set up a Credentialing Committee and a Service Review Committee; the former will verify and approve the participating nurses, pharmacists and their CP services, while the latter will monitor, audit and review these prescribing services to ensure that quality and safety are upheld.

Scaling Up Productivity Efforts

9. MOH has been working to achieve greater efficiency, deliver better quality care, and better value to patients. In 2012, the government launched the \$130 million Healthcare Productivity Fund (HPF) to support productivity efforts in the healthcare sector. As at end 2017, more than 250 projects have been implemented, benefiting over 70 public and community care organisations. The productivity initiatives ranged from workflow and role redesign, bulk procurement and adoption of assistive equipment to IT deployment and skills training.

10. To sustain efforts in healthcare productivity, the government will provide another \$80 million in funding to the HPF over the next three years (FY2018-FY2020) to scale up proven initiatives and encourage innovations. In particular, we will work closely with providers and union to improve the work of nursing and support care staff in the acute and community care settings.

11. For the acute sector, we will partner hospitals to introduce productivity solutions to augment nurses in patient care delivery in areas like vital signs monitoring, care documentation, patient transfer and care supplies management. For the community care sector, we will collaborate with operators to develop process blueprints for operational excellence, adopt assistive equipment and technologies for care and further expand demand aggregation and bulk procurement of products and services to achieve economies of scale.

12. A new supply chain agency will be formed to pool supply chain resources and functions of the three healthcare clusters. This will seek to achieve system-level gains

and support care transformation through greater economies of scale, new capabilities and innovations in procurement and supply chain management.

Innovating for New Solutions

13. The MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT), set up to identify and experiment with game changing innovations, will focus on longer-term issues and changes that can be scaled up for system-level transformation. MOHT aims to catalyse and facilitate the reshaping of the healthcare system towards one that provides longitudinal, holistic care across residents' entire life course. MOHT's programmes and ideas will focus on wellness, prevention of chronic disease, and empowerment of patients and individuals for better self-management.

14. Among various programmes, MOHT is working with the National University Health System (NUHS) to re-imagine healthcare for the future, and design new and innovative care models. This starts with developing a health empowering campus at Alexandra Hospital from the second half of 2018. As part of this review, a master plan study of the Alexandra Hospital site and how to improve its synergy with NUH at Kent Ridge is also being carried out.

Ensuring Future-ready Regulations

15. MOH will enact a new Healthcare Services Bill to replace the current Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Act (PHMCA) this year. The new Bill will allow MOH to strengthen its legislative powers to safeguarding patient safety and welfare, as well as continuity of care.

16. For better patient safety and integration of care across settings, all healthcare service providers will be required to participate in the National Electronic Health Record (NEHR).

17. To allow healthcare businesses and innovators to test new care models and services that have the potential to improve cost and care for patients, MOH is rolling out a Licence Experimentation and Adaptation Programme (LEAP). LEAP is a regulatory sandbox that will allow businesses and innovators to test new services in a controlled environment and over a time limited period. During the pilot, MOH will continue to ensure that these businesses maintain essential safeguards for patient safety, while relaxing certain regulatory requirements or piloting new ones. Successful pilots will be mainstreamed under new licence categories in the Healthcare Services Bill with appropriate and essential regulatory requirements specific to these new services.

Facilitating Better Decision-making

18. Everyone has a part to play to ensure sustainable and affordable healthcare, including the government, individuals, healthcare providers and professionals, and payers like insurers and employers.

19. Going forward, we will provide more information to facilitate better decisions. A Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee has been set up to provide a reference for reasonable charges. This will enable professionals, payers and patients to make better informed decisions on their care options. The Committee aims to develop the first tranche of fee benchmarks for common medical procedures in the second half of 2018.

20. The Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE) has released 19 Drug Guidances to date, which communicate recommendations on the subsidy status and appropriate use of the drug technologies evaluated. ACE has also published four Appropriate Care Guides, providing concise and evidence-based recommendations on care practices for conditions such as pre-diabetes and diabetes.

21. MOH will also be using data to more effectively drive value-driven care in our healthcare system. By collecting, benchmarking and analysing various quality and cost indicators, and providing the data to healthcare professionals, we aim to improve outcomes for patients through treatment that is both clinically and cost effective. An example is NUHS's ongoing Value Driven Outcome project.