

MEDIA RELEASE

National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore sets up new specialist dental clinic for seniors with medical conditions and complex needs at Alexandra Hospital to increase accessibility and ease capacity for subsidised specialist dental treatment for seniors

Singapore, 3 April 2023 – The National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore (NUCOHS) has set up its first satellite specialist dental clinic three kilometres away, at Alexandra Hospital (AH). Operational since 8 March 2023, it has the capacity to see about 100 patients a week. The clinic sees all eligible adult patients, with a dedicated focus on seniors 65 years and above. These seniors may be medically compromised, frail and dependent, especially those who are at risk of age-related dental diseases, neurocognitive diseases, physical / cognitive disabilities, multiple chronic conditions or are at late / advanced stage of their diseases, and are not suitably seen in the primary care setting. The clinic was officially opened by Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health & Ministry of Law, on 3 April 2023.

2 Referrals to the satellite dental clinic may come from AH's specialist geriatric ward and outpatient clinics, its inpatient wards, nursing homes, polyclinics and Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) registered clinics as well as onward referrals to NUCOHS if patients require more complex, tertiary-level care. By collaborating with AH's robust healthy ageing geriatric programme cum clinic, which is focused on helping older adults with age-related cognitive, functional and mobility challenges and promote a healthy and productive longevity, there is greater accessibility to more comprehensive services for seniors in the community.

2 The clinic will provide a wide range of clinical services in the areas of preventive and restorative dentistry e.g. oral hygiene education, dental caries and periodontal (gum) disease management, restoration of damaged teeth, pain and infection

management and replacement of missing teeth, to rehabilitate and help maintain elderly patients back to good oral health.

4 Singapore has one of the fastest ageing populations in the world. It is estimated that one in four adults in Singapore will be aged 65 years and older by 2030. There are about 160,000 seniors living in the west covered by the National University Health System (NUHS), of whom, about 44,000 suffer from diabetes, hyperlipidaemia and hypertension. Older adults are commonly affected by multiple chronic conditions which can affect their oral health and the way oral healthcare is provided for them. More than 30% of Singaporeans over the age of 65 years of age do not have functional natural dentition. Hence, retaining and restoring teeth in the elderly is important for improving oral function and dental appearance, having a balanced nutrition, improving overall health and enhancing their quality of life.

5 Staffed by dental surgeons and specialists from NUCOHS, the right siting of such a geriatric-dentistry specialist clinic at AH is beneficial as it is located in the heart of Queenstown, the oldest public housing estate in Singapore, which has about 20% of its 10,000 resident population aged 65 and above. Queenstown is Singapore's first health district with its own community care apartment. AH is right now redeveloping itself to be bigger and provide more comprehensive facilities by 2030. As the first Integrated General Hospital (IGH) in Singapore providing patient-centric holistic care without transfers to other institutions, the new clinic located at AH augments this positioning. More than 50% of AH's patients (both outpatient and inpatient) are 65 years and older. Existing inpatients who need specialised geriatric oral healthcare will experience a smooth transition to the dental clinic that is now located in-house. AH has been and will continue to provide free transport for mobility impaired outpatients from clinic back home. Currently, the wait time for first appointment is under one week. The close proximity between NUCOHS and AH will also allow this new clinic to tap on medical and academic capabilities to better facilitate the co-management of the medical and dental needs of patients with co-existing medical conditions that make routine oral health treatment more complex.

6 Through this new clinic, the NUS Faculty of Dentistry will be able to provide additional training for qualified dentists pursuing the Graduate Diploma in Geriatric

Dentistry to advance their clinical management of senior patients. Apart from postgraduate training, the Faculty also incorporates elements of geriatric dentistry in its undergraduate curriculum. This ensures that newly qualified dentists are equipped with the knowledge and skills to manage senior patients. Beyond education, the Faculty also embarks on research which helps to inform evidence-based prevention and treatment of oral diseases in the geriatric population. For example, using psychological theories such as the Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Cognitive Theory, the Faculty studies how it can empower seniors to take better care of their oral health by maintaining a healthy diet and practising good hygiene habits.

7 The clinic is equipped with five treatment rooms including one for wheelchair bound or trolley bound patients with en-suite radiographic equipment, and other facilities such as hoist for safer transfer of patients when needed in other rooms.

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About Alexandra Hospital

Alexandra Hospital (AH) comes under the National University Health System (NUHS), and serves as a 326-bedder facility, providing seamless, one-stop comprehensive care by one care team to some 100,000 residents in the Queenstown precinct (the oldest housing estate) and Southwest and the rest of Singapore. Alexandra Hospital is the first Integrated General Hospital in Singapore providing holistic and seamless care from acute, sub-acute to rehabilitative settings, reducing the need for a patient to transfer to another healthcare institution. The clinical model is team-led and programme-based. This means that every patient who comes to Alexandra Hospital will be placed under at least one of the following five core clinical programmes, and be taken care of by a single doctor and the same care team, under one of these programmes.

The hospital's Care Managers assist patients, families with the help of community partners so that medical and social help can be planned and provided to those who need it and continuously by primary care providers, thereby empowering them to stay healthy at home and in the community.

AH is also the site for staging innovative health and care as well as person-centric solutions with a view to enabling best practices to be scoped, shared and scaled with the help of technological advancements. Together with the community, AH strives to bring about seamless integrated care beyond discharge, and enabling continuity of care anchored in the safety and comfort of the home and community.

Visit us at www.ah.com.sg. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram: @AlexandraHospitalSG

About the National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore (NUCOHS)

The National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore (NUCOHS) is a national specialty centre that provides a comprehensive spectrum of dental care to manage oral, dental, and jaw-related conditions in patients across the lifespan. NUCOHS is also well poised to provide oral healthcare to the geriatric population as well as patients with special needs including those with complex medical conditions.

NUCOHS draws on the expertise of its clinicians and experts in the fields of Endodontics, Oral Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics, Periodontics, Paediatric Dentistry and Prosthodontics, Geriatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health from the National University Hospital's (NUH) University Dental Cluster (UDC) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) Faculty of Dentistry to operate within NUHS under an academic health centre governance model. Its vision is to transform oral health in Singapore, nurture the next generation of oral health professionals, and champion impactful multi-disciplinary research in oral health.

NUCOHS is one of the three national centres, along with the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) and the National University Heart Centre, Singapore (NUHCS), which form an integral part of the National University Health System (NUHS) in meeting the evolving specialised healthcare needs of the population in Singapore.

For more information, please visit: www.nucohs.com.sg