

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS

1. IMH celebrated Volunteers' Day with some 150 volunteers on Saturday, 12 December. Among them is a group that volunteers with Stepping Stones Connect, a family support group started by IMH for families/caregivers of patients from its rehabilitation programme.
2. Over the years, there is increasing awareness of caregiver stress, as documented in medical journals. Recognising the need to alleviate caregiver stress, IMH set up this support group for caregivers of its patients. IMH staff from its department of Medical Social Work and Rehabilitation Psychiatry regularly organise talks, family support meetings, and social activities for members of the support group. About a year ago, a group of volunteers started helping out with these activities. This volunteer group comprises 6 members, led by Madam Moreen Tan, who has 15 years of volunteer work with different organisations. Madam Tan has also roped in her teenaged son and husband.
3. Madam Tan said, "I think what we are doing is important. We have many volunteers that support the patients at IMH. I think it is essential that we support the family members as well." She observed "By working with the healthcare professionals here, I am amazed by the recovery process I have observed in patients. The staff at IMH build the self-esteem and equip the patients with skills so that they become self-sufficient. As volunteers, we become part of the process in helping the patients recover. So, although I work with the family members, the volunteers and I are friends to the patients too."
4. The volunteers work under the guidance of the Medical Social Worker department. Ms Lilian Mark, Head Medical Social Work, is appreciative of the volunteers' efforts. Ms Mark shared, "The volunteers have provided support in many areas, including efforts to

keep our patients meaningfully occupied so their families can participate in the family sessions. The volunteers have taken pains to find out how the patients can best be supported. For instance, they find out what they enjoy and come up with a range of activities to keep them occupied. They frequently serve up culinary delights for each family support session too! Out of their passion to ensure a job well done, they have even used their own resources to equip the ward with a karaoke set for the patients.” Ms Mark added, “Our volunteers are also a means of increasing public awareness and acceptance of people with mental illness. Because they have interacted with our patients, they can help us to dispel common myths that people have about mental illness.”

5. Dr Eu Pui Wai, Senior Consultant of General Psychiatry and Director of Rehabilitation Psychiatry shared, “We value the input that volunteers have. Volunteers provide an additional dimension to the care provided by professional staff. Patients need acceptance from others. Our volunteers do this for the patients by spending time with them during their rehab activities”.

6. IMH’s volunteer programme is opened to anyone aged above 16 years. The various activities that a volunteer can choose from include conducting gardening activities, painting or arts and craft sessions, teaching social skills, pet therapy, or organising excursions for the patients. Corporations may choose bigger scale projects such as mural wall painting or even adopt a ward so that their staff may conduct regular activities for the ward. To volunteer at IMH, the public may visit www.imh.com.sg. Those who wish to volunteer on an ad-hoc basis may sign up on the Singapore Cares portal at www.nvpc.org.sg. IMH volunteer activities are listed under “Healthcare”.

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About IMH

The Institute of Mental Health/Woodbridge Hospital (IMH/WH) is the only tertiary mental health centre in Singapore. It offers a multi-faceted and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and counseling services to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents, adults and the elderly. IMH also runs mental health education programmes for the general public. These programmes aim to promote mental wellness and raise awareness of the importance and benefits of prevention, early detection and treatment of mental disorders.