

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **IMH NURSES CELEBRATE 90 YEARS OF PSYCHIATRIC NURSING**

1. In conjunction with IMH's 90th anniversary this year, nurses in IMH celebrated Nurses' Day by looking back and forward at how psychiatric nursing has evolved over the years. Themed "90 Years of Psychiatric Nursing: Nostalgia and Beyond", the event was graced by Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health.

#### **IMH Nursing Awards**

2. Mr Gan presented 18 IMH awards to outstanding nurses, both individuals and teams, for their contributions towards excellent patient care and teamwork. The awards include the coveted Nightingale Award, the Most Improved Unit Award, Star Awards, Team Spirit Awards and Best Clinical Unit Awards.

3. This year, the Nightingale Award – which recognises one nurse each year for providing excellent nursing care and for being an exemplary mentor to other nurses – was presented to Senior Nurse Clinician (SNC) Aziz Bin Ab Hamed. SNC Aziz has been a nurse with IMH for 26 years and is an advocate of life-long learning – he went back to school at the age of 48 to get his Masters of Nursing (Mental Health) at the National University of Singapore. He is a member of the multidisciplinary team involved in looking after patients in IMH's slow-stream rehabilitation programme, which was introduced in 2015 to help long-stay patients with good rehabilitation potential improve their functioning, learn independent living and vocational skills, and eventually re-integrate into the community.

4. In 2017, SNC Aziz introduced hydroponic farming in IMH for patients to grow and harvest vegetables as part of rehabilitation and recovery. SNC Aziz was on a visit to a vegetable farm in Lim Chu Kang when he came across hydroponics and was inspired to bring it to IMH. He said, "Our aim was to introduce modern farming to our patients. In addition to learning a skill, working with plants has therapeutic benefits and can improve the well-being of our patients. It is easy for our patients to manage, fun for them and they get to reap the results of their hard work within a short time."

5. SNC Aziz learnt about hydroponic farming from scratch and shared his knowledge with his colleagues in the ward before they started working together to equip patients with the necessary skills. He worked tirelessly with sponsors who provided funding to develop a hydroponic farm on a 320m<sup>2</sup> plot. The patients grow a variety of vegetables including baby spinach, *xiao bai chai*, *chye sim*, different types of lettuce such as butterhead, red oak, green coral and romaine and sell the harvest to IMH staff and visitors. The revenue raised is used to buy seedlings and nutrients for the farm and to fund programmes in the ward. Patients also receive a token sum to motivate them. At present, 30 patients from the slow-stream rehabilitation programme are involved in hydroponic farming, and there are plans to include patients in other long-stay wards.

6. Besides introducing hydroponics to patients in the slow-stream rehabilitation programme, SNC Aziz also started a cycling club for them in 2016 as a social activity and to build up the patients'

endurance. The cycling sessions are held once a week in the evenings after his working hours. Other nurses, including IMH's Chief Nurse Ms Samantha Ong, often join them as they cycle around the IMH campus. When the sessions first started, some patients could only cycle for about 1.5 km but they are now able to cover up to 9 km.

### **Psychiatric Nursing through the Years**

7. There are currently some 1,100 nurses in IMH, making up more than 40% of the IMH workforce. Ms Samantha Ong, Chief Nurse, IMH, who started as a staff nurse in the hospital in 1986, said, "As we progressed from a custodial care model in the days of the former Woodbridge Hospital to the current community-based, recovery-focused care model, the role of psychiatric nurses has also evolved. Today, nurses go beyond looking after patients' basic needs. They provide psychoeducation to help them to better understand and manage their conditions and prepare patients for discharge. Nurses also go into the community to provide care – visiting patients in their homes or in schools to provide support or detect problems early. Patients are becoming more involved in their care and have changing expectations of their care team. It is important that nurses are able to adapt and innovate to meet their needs and provide effective patient care."

8. Some of the changes seen in nursing in IMH include:

(a) New nursing roles

Career development tracks have evolved, providing opportunities for nurses in IMH to take on roles and responsibilities ranging from research to education, informatics and quality improvement. Each year, about 40 nurses are involved in various research projects to improve patient care as well as nursing practices. Some examples include studies looking at predictors of medication adherence among patients and protective factors and psychological well-being of nurses in psychiatric settings. In addition to developing continuing nursing education to meet the training needs of psychiatric nurses, the nurse educators and ward-based clinical instructors in IMH help to build the next generation of nursing workforce by sharing their knowledge with about 2,000 nursing students, aged 17 to 20, undergoing their mental health clinical attachment in IMH each year. A more recent addition to the hospital, informatics nurses oversee the development and standardisation of clinical informatics systems to enhance operations and allow nurses to spend more time on direct patient care.

(b) Upskilling of nurses

Nurses are empowered to conduct higher value practice and function at the top of their license. For instance, nurses were trained to perform assessments for patients undergoing Electroconvulsive Therapy to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. This role was previously carried out by doctors.

In 2013, the Continuity Care Clinic, led by Advanced Practice Nurses (APN), was initiated for patients with complex needs who are discharged. Previously, these patients were seen at IMH clinics by Medical Officers. Now, there is greater continuity of care with the patient being followed up by the same APN, who monitors their condition, adherence to medications and assists him/her in adjusting to living in the community.

In July this year, APN Xu Changqing, one of IMH's five Nurses' Merit Award winners this year, became the first APN in IMH to graduate from the Collaborative Prescribing Programme (CPP) developed by Ministry of Health. The programme enables senior pharmacists and APNs to legally prescribe medications to treat medical or psychiatric conditions. Three more APNs from IMH will be enrolled in the second run of the programme in August 2018.

(c) Innovations for better nursing care

IMH nurses continue to adopt innovations to enhance nursing care. For instance, macerators were installed in 26 long-stay and acute wards in December 2017 to improve hygiene and waste disposal. The macerators shred and flush away disposable pulp bedpans and urinal bottles after every single use in a quick and hygienic way. This helps reduce odours and risk of hospital-acquired cross infections, enhancing workplace health and safety. It also saves nurses time which can be spent on direct patient care. Macerators will be progressively installed in all other wards.

(d) New nursing governance

IMH's nursing department embarked on a shared governance structure in 2017 to foster collective leadership, decision-making and to promote nursing autonomy. The structure comprises four councils – Nursing Coordinating Council, Nursing Clinical Practice Council, Nursing Quality and Patient Safety Council and Unit-Based Council – all of which work closely together to support ground-up initiatives and facilitate best nursing practices and patient outcomes.

### **Battle of the Brush**

9. In line with the Nurses' Day theme, IMH nurses were invited to create and submit artworks that depict IMH's decades of caring for the mental well-being of Singaporeans. The winning painting from the "Battle of the Brush" competition was announced during the celebrations and displayed in the hospital's Woodbridge Museum to commemorate the hospital's anniversary.

10. During the Nurses' Day celebrations, Mr Gan visited the hydroponic garden started by SNC Aziz, and viewed the "Battle of the Brush" artworks by nurses.

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### **For media queries, please contact:**

Ms Lalitha Naidu  
Assistant Manager, Corporate Communications  
Institute of Mental Health  
Email: LN\_GOPAL\_KRISHNAN@imh.com.sg  
DID: (65) 6389 3887 HP: (65) 9006 9375

### **About Institute of Mental Health (IMH)**

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH), a member of the National Healthcare Group, is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 23-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and therapy services in hospital-based and community-based settings. The 2010-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (aged below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore. For more information, please visit [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg).