



Handmade encouragement cards by Lee Kong Chian Gardens School to the healthcare heroes at IMH. These gifts certainly brought smiles to staff.

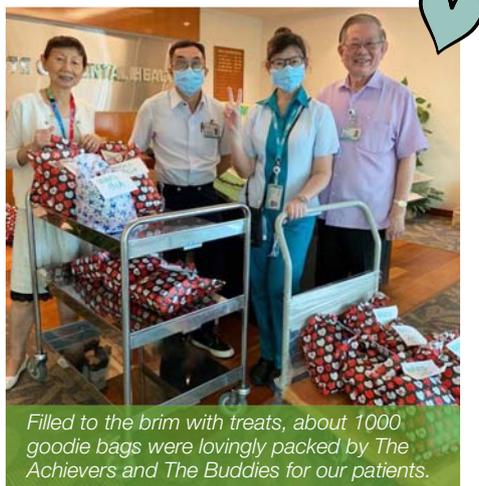
Keeping Patient Activities Alive

Volunteers play an important role in the lives of about 1000 long-stay patients at IMH as many do not have friends or relatives who visit them. They befriend patients and help to bridge the gap between home and the hospital.

With the enhanced infection control and circuit breaker measures in place to curb the spread of Covid-19, all activities and programmes conducted by volunteers for patients have been suspended. This has disrupted the lives and routines of the patients; and the absence is acutely felt by both parties.

However, IMH's resourceful volunteers continued to keep in touch with the patients by sending care packages comprising notes,

snacks, and DIY craft packs so they can continue to occupy themselves with these activities in their absence.



Filled to the brim with treats, about 1000 goodie bags were lovingly packed by The Achievers and The Buddies for our patients.



Besides live music and dance performances, volunteers also took turns to engage with patients on Zoom.

demonstrated by the volunteers for the patients to follow and even a sing-along session with energetic participation from everyone present. It was such a success that it has spawned several more with other wards every weekend, with volunteers even celebrating birthdays of patients and events such as Mother's Day and Hari Raya virtually.

We Will Be Back Again

"The volunteers have such strong bonds with patients and are part of their lives. Just like how we miss meeting up with our friends during this 'Stay Home' period, our patients also miss their volunteer friends," Volunteer Programme Manager Catherine Chua shared.

The physical presence and interaction of volunteers with patients is valuable and irreplaceable. We certainly look forward to welcoming volunteers back at IMH.

Staying United with Technology

The first video meeting for patients with volunteers from The Achievers, The Buddies and Matchsticks took place on 11 April. The highly anticipated video conference via ZOOM was certainly a highlight during the circuit breaker period. While the patients were excited and happy to see and talk to the volunteers, it was also a tearful virtual reunion for both groups.

The pilot session kicked off with greetings and catching up with each other, simple exercises



Activity packs sent in by our volunteer groups are filled with jigsaw and word puzzles, origami crafts, colouring books, games and puppet-making cards.

Health Screening on Wheels

Bringing convenient health screening services to the community is the hallmark of National Healthcare Group Diagnostics (NHGD), which provides imaging and laboratory services in primary care.

Besides offering these services in its static centres in clinics and community hospitals, NHGD also has a fleet of mobile service vehicles that offer screening convenience at the doorsteps of organisations.

Two of NHGD's mobile service vehicles that you may have seen at IMH are the Mobile BMD and Mammobus.

Mobile BMD

The Bone Mineral Density (BMD) test is an X-ray examination that helps to detect osteoporosis by measuring the amount of bone mineral in the spine and hip.



NHGD's Mobile BMD service at IMH enables IMH patients to go for BMD screening without travelling to external sites.

Before NHGD launched Singapore's first Mobile BMD service in 2011, BMD was only available in hospitals. With the Mobile BMD, greater convenience was brought to the community as patients could go for screening nearer their homes.

Since making its debut in IMH in 2016, the Mobile BMD is on-site on scheduled days every month. At IMH, BMD screening is done as part of an initiative to identify patients who are at risk of or have underlying osteoporotic conditions so that timely interventions can be made. It is also done for patients who have had one or more fractures. The service has been well received for its convenience and accessibility that benefit both IMH staff and patients. To date, more than 800 IMH patients have benefited from its service.

"The staff will not need to send patients to external sites for BMD screening. This will cut back on the transport and manpower support otherwise required. We are thankful that the Mobile BMD has been able to meet our overall needs," said a member of the IMH operations team that facilitates the BMD service between NHGD and IMH.

NHGD currently has two Mobile BMD vehicles looking after the increased screening needs in the community.

Mammobus

Mammogram screening is an X-ray examination to detect early stages of breast cancer so that treatment can be introduced promptly for better recovery rates. Since 2006, NHGD has been

operating the Mammobus, which is Singapore's first and only mobile mammography screening centre accredited under both the MediSave scheme and BreastScreen Singapore programme.



NHGD's Mammobus brings mammogram screening to the doorstep of IMH.

To further support the early screening of breast cancer in the community, NHGD launched its second Mammobus in 2019. It is the first mammobus in Singapore installed with a Full-Field Digital Mammography (FFDM) system, which provides faster and more comfortable screening.

Thanks to the Mammobus, mammogram screening is now easily accessible at workplaces or community spaces. And, with funding from the Community Mammobus Programme, mammogram screening is made more affordable as ladies who qualify for this scheme pay between \$0 to \$35 for their screening.

IMH is one of the organisations that has been engaging the Mammobus to do mammogram screening for its staff on a regular basis. Each year, about 50 IMH staff are screened through the Mammobus service.



“ I like its convenience because it brings healthcare to us. The screening was good and efficient. ”

– IMH Staff,
Department of Developmental Psychiatry

NHG Diagnostics supports polyclinics, general practitioners, community hospitals, nursing homes, home care providers and the community with its range of laboratory and imaging services. Companies or organisations that are keen on arranging mobile health screening services at your doorstep may email asknhgd@diagnostics.nhg.com.sg for more information.

-- Article contributed by National Healthcare Group Diagnostics

Building Resilience

Nur Afiqah

I had depressive moods during my university days. It was tough enduring it for 4 years as I felt as if a huge boulder was tied to my back. I felt so lost and hopeless and withdrew from friends and social settings. What kept me going was the love for my studies. I was very studious and wanted to finish my studies. During times when I wanted to give up on my studies, I talked to friends whom I trust, and they encouraged me to press on. Taking up painting also helped to cheer me up.

Growing up as a child, I had low self-esteem and lacked self-love. I did not know how to talk positively to myself throughout my years of growing up. After going through counselling and rehabilitation at Club Heal, I managed to let go of my past, appreciate the present and be excited about the future.

What made me finally decide to get help was the "Beyond the Label" campaign. I saw a face on the poster and felt connected to it. It dawned on me that I was not alone in my struggle. I met my

counsellor and she gave me a questionnaire to check if I have depressive symptoms. I scored high on depression and she advised me to get a professional assessment. I was diagnosed with schizo-affective disorder in May 2019.

I have since learnt how to regulate my emotions to stabilise my low and high moods. It was tough going in the beginning. I have to trust myself to be a parent to my inner child as it helps me to calm down when the going gets tough. I am glad to have a very caring psychiatrist who listens and does not judge me. The medications really helped me with my symptoms.

I have grown a lot as a person as my symptoms start to slowly go away with the help of medication. I am still learning to build up my resilience.. I would like to thank my parents, psychiatrist, counsellor and my case manager for being my pillars of support. My hope for the future is to continue to take care and feel secure about myself; and to be able to contribute back to the community in time to come.



#InThisTogether

Let's care for our mental health during this period! We are #InThisTogether

Follow the National Healthcare Group (NHG) and Mental Health Awareness Singapore Facebook pages for more mental health tips from this series.

#InThisTogether series is brought to you by a team of psychologists at the Institute of Mental Health.



<https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessSG/>



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#InThisTogether: Self-Care Is Not Selfish

Us Healthcare Warriors know we are #InThisTogether for the long haul. As we juggle between reading the latest world news, following staff advisories and completing our daily work, remember to make time for Self-Care.

TIPS

- Exercise regularly
- Schedule time for kindness
- Lookout for the good news - watch the Clap for #SGUnited videos
- Socialise creatively - video call lunch to colleagues and friends

Try Slow Breathing!

Slow breathing helps reduce stress and you can use it anytime! Repeat the steps until you feel relaxed.

#InThisTogether - Staying Home for #SGUNITED

Many of us are doing our part to stay home during this crucial period. We miss our friends, family, freedom and years for the good old days. We have to learn to manage feelings of loneliness and isolation before it becomes a concern.

IMPACT

- Feeling stuck and trapped
- Missing familiar people and routines
- Feeling an edge especially if home doesn't feel safe

Try the following tips

- Be kind to yourself and each other.
- Do what is key for yourself and family and let things slide if they are out of the ordinary.
- Connect with the outside world, get some sun and fresh air from your window.
- Share with friends about how you feel.
- Call the National CARE Helpline at 1800 222 2288 if you feel unsafe, concerned about someone else's safety, or if you feel emotionally distressed during this period of fighting COVID-19.

#InThisTogether - HOME-BASED AND LEARNING

Parents and children are now HOME-based and learning to adapt to the new normal despite impact of COVID-19. How do we manage our emotions and stay motivated?

IMPACT

- Anger and frustration of being in ECR HOME
- Stress because of changes in routines
- Loneliness due to less social interaction and no CCAs
- Fear and anxiety of COVID-19 outbreaks

Try the following tips

- Set up a routine
- Plan and schedule your daily activities
- Share your feelings with family and friends
- Use technology to connect with friends and family
- Engage in home-based learning activities
- Practice self-care and relaxation techniques
- Stay positive and optimistic
- Seek support from family and friends
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#InThisTogether - Activate Yourself!

When we are feeling blue, we tend to feel like not doing much and keeping to ourselves. If you are feeling down, try doing something you find enjoyable or meaningful. Start doing it for just 5 mins, until you don't feel blue. Try doing something every day.

Here are some ideas:

- Get dressed in your favorite clothes and regular meals
- Take short walks around your home
- Video call your friends and family
- Plan and schedule your daily activities
- Share your feelings with family and friends
- Use technology to connect with friends and family
- Engage in home-based learning activities
- Practice self-care and relaxation techniques
- Stay positive and optimistic
- Seek support from family and friends

Problem Gambling

Betty Anizah Lee,
Counsellor,
National Addictions Management Service (NAMS),
IMH



What is gambling and how can it be an addiction?

Gambling is the wagering of money or something of value on an event, with the intention of winning money or materialistic goods.

A person develops an addiction when there are persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behaviour leading to signs of significant impairment or distress. He may develop irrational beliefs regarding gambling, overestimates subjective probabilities of winning, believes in beating the odds, and attempts to develop 'strategies' to beat the game. A person with a gambling addiction is also not able to appreciate the fact that in any form of gambling, the outcome is an unpredictable, random event over which one has no control.

What are some of the warning signs that a person's gambling is becoming a problem?

A person may have persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences or thinking of ways to get money to gamble with. He may also return another day to get even or chase one's losses thus missing work or school, and even important family events. The person may be concealing the extent of involvement with gambling and incurring unexplained debts, or failing to pay bills.

By the time the person reaches the pathological gambling state, he would have incurred heavy financial debts and started borrowing from various sources. In some cases, the person may steal from family, friends or his workplace, which often results in legal consequences.

The person may become irritable and start experiencing depressive symptoms such as low mood, anxiety, poor appetite and poor sleep. Some people may experience physical manifestation of depressive symptoms like headaches, gastric problems or fatigue.

How can one support a loved one facing gambling problems?

Family and friends can help by making treatment-related information and resources readily available. They can provide support by being emotionally present for the person facing gambling problems. They could also attend family support groups to get support and learn how to re-focus on their own well-being and to learn more functional and effective ways of providing support for the gambler.

If the gambler is unwilling to seek help despite negative consequences, it is important for family members to start protecting their financial assets and minimise further damages from the gambler's gambling. In such cases, family members can help by not "rescuing" the gambler unconditionally from financial predicaments created by gambling e.g. by providing financial bailouts.

What are some of the treatment plans available at NAMS to curb problem gambling?

Research has generally shown that cognitive behavioural therapy and motivational enhancement therapy works best with gambling patients.

In NAMS, both individual and group counselling are utilised for gambling patients. Individual counselling uses cognitive behavioural therapy as an overarching framework and includes components of motivational enhancement therapy. Group counselling also incorporates these therapeutic components and also have an added advantage of allowing the therapist to capitalise on processes particular to group work like group dynamics, camaraderie, universality, caring confrontations and ongoing support amongst members between therapy sessions.

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