

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**FRIDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2023**

**RECOVERY-FOCUSED CARE MODEL IN IMH GETS A BOOST  
WITH COMPLETION OF WARD REFURBISHMENT  
AND OPENING OF STEPPING STONES REHABILITATION CENTRE**

1. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) has completed a ward refurbishment and improvement project, aimed at enhancing inpatient care and improving operational efficiency. Funded by the Ministry of Health, 11 acute wards have been refurbished. This includes the creation of the new Stepping Stones Rehabilitation Centre (Stepping Stones) and Short Stay Unit (SSU), and the refurbishment of the addiction medicine ward (Serenity Centre), a child and adolescent ward, and 6 general psychiatry wards. These will better support IMH's recovery-focused model of care, which advocates holistic and patient-centred treatment and management.
2. **Minister for Health, Mr Ong Ye Kung officiated the opening of Stepping Stones and Serenity Centre this afternoon.** Stepping Stones, which was repurposed from an existing ward, is designed for patients who will benefit from structured psychosocial rehabilitation to prepare for independent living in the community. They undergo an 8-week programme that includes training in life skills and social skills, and vocational training. This will help them gain better insight into their condition, and be equipped to manage their recovery journey so as to integrate into the community where they can lead meaningful lives.

**Stepping Stones Rehabilitation Centre**

3. A multi-disciplinary team fronted by nurses and allied health professionals, with support from psychiatrists, helms Stepping Stones. A strengths-based approach is taken, where the team focuses on the patients' individual strengths, interests, and abilities to build their confidence for independent living. Using a recovery wellness plan, staff will guide each patient to consider his rehabilitation goals in the areas of

employment, accommodation, relationships, illness management, hobbies and self-improvement. The patients will get to choose from an array of activities and programmes according to their aspirations, interests and motivation, which gives them greater ownership of their personal recovery.

4. The 100-bedded Stepping Stones features a home-like environment with features such as a living room, kitchen, computer room and laundry room. These functional spaces encourage personal responsibility as well as practical communal living. Suitable patients will also learn to manage their own medication(s) under staff supervision, and be allotted a pigeon hole where their course(s) of medication will be stored.
5. The Stepping Stones patients can put their job training skills to use through various work trial opportunities within our hospital setting. Some of the jobs we have created within IMH for patients to start working and earning an income including F & B jobs (kitchen work, licensed food handling), cleaning jobs, gardening, hydroponics farming, packing, etc.
6. Stepping Stones patients who are ready to be discharged will either return home or to residential stepped-down facilities. The Stepping Stones programme can also be extended another 4 weeks (i.e. to 12 weeks in total) on a case-by-case basis for patients requiring additional rehabilitation.

### **Recovery Model of Care**

7. Patients are likely to be at the worst point of their illness when hospitalisation is needed. For many of them, an acute episode or a relapse of a mental illness often leads to cognitive, functional and emotional losses in varying degrees. These could be a loss of their social functioning (e.g. difficulties taking care of themselves or maintaining meaningful relationships), or impairment of their ability to fulfil their roles at home and in the community (e.g. the illness disrupts their studies or work). These losses can be as debilitating as their medical symptoms, affecting their ability to lead independent and productive lives.
8. With a recovery-focused care approach, the aim is to alleviate the acute symptoms of the illness, and start the patients on a recovery journey to reclaim what they have lost during the acute episode or over the course of their illness. This care model is rooted

in the belief that with the right support, recovery is possible and patients can take charge to manage or live with their conditions while resuming their functions and roles in life.

9. “Beyond a physical overhaul, the ward refurbishment is about creating environments that are more conducive for running personalised recovery programmes,” says Associate Professor Swapna Verma, Chairman, Medical Board at IMH. “The relationship between psychiatric symptoms and functioning is often bidirectional. Even if the patients’ physical symptoms have stabilised, they may not always be able to return to previous levels of social function. The patient’s potential may not have been optimised, and this may set him or her back in the recovery journey,” she adds.
10. “The recovery model allows us to practise person-centred care that looks at their needs more holistically. With the dedicated amenities in the refurbished wards, we can offer a higher level of differentiated care to patients, and accommodate a wider range of psychosocial, vocational and recreational needs. The enhanced facilities also enable us to work more efficiently with families and community partners to chart post-discharge care plans for our patients,” says A/Prof Swapna.

### **Refurbished General Psychiatric Wards**

11. Unlike patients in a general hospital who mostly keep to their beds, patients recovering in the IMH wards do not confine themselves to their beds, but move about in the day lounge within the ward. It is where they interact with other inpatients, have their meals and enjoy TV entertainment in between their treatment activities. Since moving into these refurbished wards, patients can take part in more activities such as preparing meals in open-concept kitchenettes as part of occupational therapy, or enjoying fresh air and gardening at the adjoining sky terrace. Patients will also be able to exercise using sports equipment soon, within the improved environment of the refurbished wards.
12. Patients in the general psychiatry acute wards may be recently diagnosed, or experiencing a relapse of their mental health conditions. Their length of stay averages about three to four weeks. The immediate priority is to alleviate their acute symptoms through medication, and stabilise their condition. Following that, depending on individual needs, treatment may include non-pharmacological interventions such as

psychosocial therapy and occupational therapy. If the patients require a period of focused rehabilitation prior to discharge and are assessed to be suitable, they may be transferred to Stepping Stones.

13. Continuity of care is important for patients discharged from the ward. While follow-up clinical care is provided at the outpatient clinics, IMH works closely with an ecosystem of community service providers to render other support, such as nursing care, social support and counselling to patients within the community. The reconfigured ward design allows IMH to engage these partners on-site in the ward, to chart the patient's discharge plan together with the patients and their caregivers.
14. Each refurbished general psychiatry ward houses 43 inpatient beds and includes the following new features:
  - **consultation rooms** fitted with dedicated teleconference facilities and enhanced network support to facilitate virtual psychiatric consultations and teleconferencing with families;
  - **multi-purpose rooms** that are configurable to accommodate both small- and big-group discussions among care teams, families and social service agencies on treatment plans and post-discharge care, and also doubles up as spaces for individual or group therapy sessions;
  - **enhanced care cubicle** for patients who are highly disturbed and who need closer observation and monitoring. Having a dedicated space provides more privacy for such patients to recuperate with less stimuli, and also keeps them from disturbing other patients in the ward;
  - **open-concept kitchenette** where patients can prepare beverages and simple meals, and where occupational therapists can conduct the full spectrum of meal preparation and housekeeping activities for patients as part of their therapy;
  - **Sky terrace** where patients can enjoy some greenery and gardening activities; also doubles up as an area for patients to meet their visitors.

## Serenity Centre

15. A specialised addiction medicine ward for persons in recovery from addiction, Serenity Centre is founded on a new care model, with separate wings for detoxification and

treatment of comorbid mental health conditions (30 beds) and rehabilitation (10 beds). Patients undergo a one-week programme for detoxification, followed by a two- to three-week programme for rehabilitation. The modular rehabilitation programme focuses on addressing the psychological, emotional, and behavioural aspects of addiction. Patients also undergo intensive therapy and counselling that includes relapse prevention education, experiential, creativity-based and behavioural therapy, support for the family, and aftercare planning.

### **Short Stay Unit**

16. Operational since January 2022, the 30-bedded SSU caters to patients who require short-term crisis intervention and stabilisation for their acute symptoms. Most of the time, they experience behavioural and psychosocial changes in reaction to distressing crises. They may or may not have an existing mental health condition. The primary focus of care is to alleviate their immediate distress and prevent their condition from deteriorating to a stage that will require more intensive treatment. The SSU provides up to 72 hours of assessment, monitoring and management, after which patients will either be discharged or transferred to an acute ward for further treatment as needed.

### **Other works**

16. The refurbishment project included the addition of an escape bed lift in all inpatient wards, extension of the existing CCTV coverage in all inpatient blocks and common areas and enhancement of the fire safety system.

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## **About the 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 2,000-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 dedicates resources to carry out mental health promotion and raising mental health literacy. 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) or [www.facebook.com/imh.singapore](https://www.facebook.com/imh.singapore).

## Annex A

### About the Ward Refurbishment Project

In 2018, IMH embarked on an infrastructural enhancement project under funding from the Ministry of Health (MOH). The project entailed the refurbishment of 11 selected wards, upgrading of fire safety facilities, improvement of security surveillance, as well as implementation of productivity initiatives.

**Care transformation:** To better support IMH's recovery-focused care model, the ward refurbishment project involves transforming two long-stay wards to form the new Stepping Stones Rehabilitation Centre, creating a Short Stay Unit, and upgrading eight acute wards (comprising six general psychiatry wards, the addiction medicine ward, and the child and adolescent ward).

**Fire Safety:** As IMH was built in the early 1990s, our fire safety infrastructure needs to be upgraded to the latest fire safety codes. Works include providing fire compartmentation to all areas, adding Escape Bed Lifts and new fire sprinkler systems, etc. and replacing the current fire detection system.

**Security:** A more comprehensive Centralised CCTV system is being installed in all inpatient, outpatient and common areas. This will ensure better coverage of areas and enhance the security of our hospital.

**Productivity Initiatives:** The hospital kitchen is being upgraded to streamline food preparation and cooking processes with tedious/labour-intensive tasks being replaced by advanced kitchen equipment.

**Phase 1 works** had been completed in end-2021, with a new ward (Short Stay Unit) created and five acute wards refurbished (four general psychiatry wards and the child and adolescent ward).

**Phase 2 works** were completed in mid-2023, with two long-stay wards, two acute general psychiatry wards and the addiction medicine ward refurbished.