

MEDIA RELEASE

SingHealth to Advance Population Health Efforts with New Local and International Partnerships

- *SingHealth Community Hospitals has been appointed a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Social Prescribing – the first centre of its kind in the world.*
- *SingHealth also signed a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with Singapore University of Social Sciences and Singapore University of Technology and Design to address critical areas impacting population health in Singapore.*

Singapore, 28 November 2024 – SingHealth Community Hospitals (SCH), which introduced the novel model of care of social prescribing in its community hospitals since 2019, announced today that the institution has been appointed as the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Social Prescribing. This appointment took effect from 14 November 2024 and is the first centre of its kind in the world. This is a prestigious recognition of SCH's expertise and significant contributions in the field of social prescribing in the international arena.

SingHealth also advanced its population health efforts today by signing a Tripartite MOU with partners, Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) and Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). One key focus of this multi-agency collaboration is to develop a White Paper and implementation plan that addresses critical areas impacting population health in Singapore. These announcements were made at the **inaugural Asia Pacific Population Health Conference and second Asia Pacific Social Prescribing Conference**¹, held today at the Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium in the Academia, at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) Campus. Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health, was the Guest-of-Honour for the event.

Themed '*City for All Ages: Emerging Paradigms*', the Conference marked the first time that local and overseas experts in both population health and social prescribing² have gathered at the same platform to discuss these pertinent issues impacting today's healthcare landscape.

SCH named the first WHO Collaborating Centre for Social Prescribing

Being the first WHO Collaborating Centre for Social Prescribing in the world, SCH's partnership with WHO commenced in November 2024, for a duration of four years. The Collaborating Centre is geared to advance social prescribing practices globally in three key areas:

- Capacity building:** To enhance awareness, knowledge and best practices in social prescribing through workshops and training, thereby equipping stakeholders who are interested in starting social prescribing in their settings.

¹ Programme overview can be found here: <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/rhs/Pages/APPHC/Programme.aspx>

² Population health focuses on improving health outcomes for entire communities, while social prescribing addresses individuals' social determinants of health by connecting them to non-medical support in the community.

- ii. **Collaboration:** To develop and update training content in social prescribing that can be used regionally and internationally for different audience groups, including practitioners and policymakers.
- iii. **Research:** To conduct studies to strengthen evidence sharing amongst stakeholders, support informed policy decisions and programme evaluations, and contribute to regional and global evidence building for the impact of social prescribing.

WHO Collaborating Centres are selected based on past contributions of nominated institutions in accordance with WHO's strategic objectives. For the past five years, SCH has been working closely with WHO in the social prescribing sphere, including co-developing and implementing a toolkit to enable countries which are initiating social prescribing projects to get started, contributing to the development of a practitioner training programme for WHO's Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) e-learning platform (OpenWHO), as well as sharing insights on social prescribing in practice in SCH at international meetings.

"SCH is honoured to be appointed the first WHO Collaborating Centre for Social Prescribing in the world. This prestigious recognition attests to our significant progress since introducing social prescribing in our community hospitals' inpatient setting in 2019. Our innovative care model has since expanded across the SingHealth Regional Health System and implemented in community settings. This is a reflection of our commitment to address the medical and social determinants of health to enhance patient outcomes and enable them to stay well in the community. We are eager to contribute further towards raising local, regional and global standards of health-social integration through best practices in social prescribing. We look forward to this exciting time of collaboration with WHO and like-minded partners, which I am confident will positively impact the lives of populations both within and beyond Singapore's shores," said Associate Professor Gan Wee Hoe, Chief Executive Officer, SCH.

Please refer to the **Media Factsheet** for information on ongoing Social Prescribing initiatives by SCH.

Tripartite MOU signed between SingHealth, SUSS and SUTD to address critical areas impacting population health in Singapore

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the critical factors that affect Singapore's population health, a tripartite MOU was signed between SingHealth, SUSS and SUTD today. One key focus of this multi-agency collaboration is the development of a White Paper and implementation plan to address three critical areas that significantly impact population health. These are:

- i. **Ageing-in-place:** Previous studies have shown that in Singapore, 81.5%³ of elderly Singaporeans prefer to remain in the familiarity of their homes and communities as they grow older. The paper will advocate for an integrated community-based system that integrates healthcare, social services, built environment and technology to help seniors maintain their independence and quality of life.

³ Housing and Development Board., "Public Housing in Singapore: Residents' Profile, Housing Satisfaction and Preferences. HDB Sample Household Survey 2018.," 2021.

- ii. **Brain health and cognition:** With rising dementia rates, the focus is shifting from treating the condition to optimising brain health in ageing persons. The paper will propose personalised, scalable community interventions that aim to preserve cognitive function and reduce the risks of dementia.
- iii. **Social isolation:** Studies have shown that social isolation affects two in five elderly Singaporeans⁴. To address this issue, the paper will introduce the Awareness, Relationships, Infrastructure, Social Support, and Empowerment (ARISE) framework to enhance community engagement and foster relationships among elderly persons.

The goal of the White Paper is to underscore the need for cross-sector collaboration to tackle the challenges arising from the above three areas of focus effectively. The paper also aims to propose innovative solutions that will create positive impact in health, societal and economic outcomes, with the ultimate goal of increasing the span of healthy years for Singaporeans.

As part of this tripartite collaboration, SingHealth is also developing **Healthy, Empowered and Active Living (HEAL) labs** to provide real-world test-beds for community-centric, innovative, sustainable and scalable population health interventions. SingHealth will work closely with interdisciplinary teams from SUTD and SUSS to incorporate user-centred approaches, technology, design and data visualisation to develop actionable recommendations that promote healthy ageing and urban planning to support the national Age Well SG initiative.

At least six community-based HEAL labs will be developed in the Eastern region of Singapore over the next three years to support ageing-in-place programmes. These HEAL labs are located at Tiong Bahru-Telok Blangah and Marine Parade for the Southeast region, Punggol for the Northeast region, as well as Bedok, Changi-Simei and Tampines for the East region.

HEAL labs aim to create a conducive ecosystem where interventions can be rapidly tested and scaled based on real-world feedback. The HEAL labs will harness and integrate the collective expertise of academia, industry, health and social care organisations to drive innovative solutions and foster sustainable health improvements. This collaboration will holistically enhance the physical, mental, and socio-emotional health in the community through a multi-dimensional approach.

“SingHealth is privileged to work with SUTD and SUSS over the years on a diverse range of projects. This partnership marks an important milestone in creating a robust, multi-disciplinary population health research ecosystem, integrating SingHealth’s clinical expertise, SUSS’s social science insights and SUTD’s technological prowess. This collaboration will enable us to effectively use data, design and on-the-ground insights to reshape how an entire community ages. With this approach, we can fundamentally reimagine and transform healthcare delivery for our ageing population,” said Professor Lee Chien Earn, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, SingHealth Regional Health System.

Please refer to the **Annex** for information on other ongoing population health initiatives with SUSS and SUTD.

⁴ Chan, A., Malhotra, R. & Maulod, A. (2023). Commentary: Loneliness is an overlooked public health challenge in ageing Singapore. *Channel News Asia*

About the inaugural Asia Pacific Population Health Conference and second Asia Pacific Social Prescribing Conference

The joint conferences highlight the importance of aligning the different approaches and strategies available to tackle the challenges posed by the silver tsunami and the rising prevalence of chronic diseases. By weaving social prescribing into population health strategies, more effective and sustainable health improvements can be achieved to foster a more resilient and healthier Singapore.

Organised by the SingHealth Regional Health System (RHS) and SingHealth Community Hospitals (SCH), the two-day conference brings together more than 800 professionals from the healthcare, social care and education sectors for knowledge exchange and to foster innovative health approaches aimed at enhancing the well-being of communities across the region.

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About SingHealth Regional Health System (RHS)

SingHealth RHS recognises that our population can be empowered to keep well, get well and live well in their communities and homes. To achieve this, we collaborate with like-minded agencies across the health and social care sectors to identify population health needs, promote behaviour changes and develop sustainable programmes to improve quality of life. As an academic RHS, we also leverage population health research to understand healthcare utilisation patterns and to facilitate appropriate interventions across the care continuum.

For more information, please visit www.singhealth.com.sg/rhs.

About SingHealth Community Hospitals (SCH)

SCH comprises Sengkang Community Hospital, Outram Community Hospital and the future Eastern Community Hospital, where the focus goes beyond healthcare to health as we seek to deliver person-centred care to achieve health goals with our patients. As part of the SingHealth RHS, SCH believes in working closely with community partners to allow patients to receive holistic and seamless care as they get well in SCH and stay well in the community.

For more information, please visit www.singhealth.com.sg/sch.

ANNEX

SingHealth's Ongoing Population Health Initiatives with SUSS and SUTD

Community Ageing in Place Ecosystem (CAPE) Project

Community Ageing in Place Ecosystem (CAPE) is one of SingHealth's signature population health programmes which seeks to address the challenges of a declining old-age support ratio through three key pillars: social and healthcare integration, including social prescribing, built environment modifications and strategic technology implementation.

Currently piloting in Marine Parade and Bedok, this initiative is led by the SingHealth Centre for Population Health Research and Implementation (CPHRI), in collaboration with the Agency for Integrated Care, Housing Development Board, and Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). A recent needs assessment of over 300 seniors in these areas revealed that 4 in 10 seniors live alone, and more than half were at risk of frailty. These findings underscore the need for inclusive community programmes that will enhance health by addressing individuals' functional capacities.

SingHealth and SUTD will be collaborating to co-design spaces to facilitate social programming run by community partners such as Montfort Care and Thye Hua Kwan. This multi-agency partnership aims to drive the co-creation of ecosystems enable innovative initiatives that can support the health and wellbeing of seniors.

INFINITY-ICOPE

In another collaboration with SUSS and other academic and community partners, SingHealth is leading a five-year research programme, "INFINITY-ICOPE", to look into ways to delay frailty and promote healthy ageing, so that seniors can continue to retain and improve their functional and cognitive abilities to live their lives to the fullest. This research programme is the first study to adopt the World Health Organization's Integrated Care for Older Persons (ICOPE) guidelines that enable healthcare systems and programme providers to assess and measure the effectiveness of care pathways and capacity of services to deliver integrated care in the community.