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Empowering Patients and Care Providers through Therapeutic Patient Education



By Dr Paul Victor S/O Patinadan



NHG Education's efforts in TPE will allow care professionals to better understand their patients' health-related needs, and support their empowerment and activation

The empowered patient is undoubtedly a clinical ideal and a clinician's greatest asset; with these individuals being well-informed about their medical condition(s) and their care options. However, every patient is at a different point of his/her empowerment journey, with many having not begun at all or being aware of it.

In aiding patients along this path towards being care partners and agents of their own change, it is important to be aware of several primary challenges.

Firstly, patients often do not want to be on this patient's journey – simply because nobody wants to be ill. Many may wish for a speedy return to life the way it was "before", however, being ill-informed and emotionally unprepared means that they would not be well-equipped to make the best decisions for their care.

Secondly, they are likely to be overwhelmed by the barrage of medical (or technical) information, the high stress, and the emotional volatility brought on by the illness. And this can undermine even the most emboldened patient.

And lastly, to be aware that the patient exists within various social ecosystems, and they are usually not the "sole" decision-makers. Family members and friends play a huge role in influencing their care and treatment decisions.

The provision of effective patient education is a clear means in aiding patients towards empowerment and addressing these challenges, but it must also be sensitive to the life situation they are embedded in.

To facilitate the process of patient empowerment, NHG College and Group Education are collaborating to make Therapeutic Patient Education (TPE) as one of its core areas for research and practice in the coming years. Having always worked towards the education of formal learners such as faculty, care providers and staff, this "paradigm shift" in education will involve the "training" of NHG's largest stakeholder; the patient population.

TPE is based on the idea that educating patients – helping them develop skills to manage and adapt their daily lives and habits to their disease – contributes to their health, and hence changes their health outcomes. It also involves the patients' families and care providers in the care process, to get everyone to understand and work through the disease conditions and treatment options together, with the goal of maintaining and even improving the patients' quality of life.

To achieve this, the first step in NHG Education's TPE efforts will require faculty and practicing care providers to be equipped and skilled in evidence-based TPE knowledge.



TPE materials that are developed with the patient in mind can help patients gain relevant knowledge needed for self-management of their health conditions

The suite of incoming TPE training modules and components to kick-start the efforts will be introduced in a structured and progressive manner to allow care providers to first focus on understanding and ascertaining the health literacy of patients, introducing them to core literature and a suite of easy-to-employ measures such as the Newest Vital Sign, and Health Literacy Test (Singapore).

Guided by the latest clinical research, these modules will support the development of practical competencies and skillsets for healthcare providers, as well as considerations on how to establish patients' needs, expectations, and receptiveness. These can be achieved through facilitating relevant psycho-social skills and scaffolding motivational interview techniques.

Care providers will also be granted access to a consolidated repository of key TPE-related theories and research, allowing them to reference and employ the latest multidisciplinary empirical findings when developing TPE programmes and materials for their patient populations.

As patients gain greater awareness and autonomy, and become more involved in their health management processes, their standing partnerships with care providers will become especially salient.

Beyond being an information repository for patients, TPE programmes that are developed and implemented with the right educative stance can aid in effective management of conditions, prevention of avoidable complications, and even improvement of quality of life. It is hoped that these TPE efforts will result in an overarching therapeutic effect for patients and their families, empowering them and instilling confidence in the management of their health.



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Uncovering Our Hidden Heroes: NHG Residency Community Engagement Day

Eighty-two newly-minted residents along with 40 chief residents, faculty and administrators spent their Saturday (9 July 2022) morning shadowing ancillary staff at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, as part of the annual National Healthcare Group (NHG) Residency Community Engagement Day (CED).



Residents learning more about the duties and challenges that the KTPH ambulance crew faces on a daily basis

Held face-to-face for the first time since the start of the pandemic, this year's CED aimed to provide incoming residents with a glimpse of the less prominent community in the hospitals, and how the ancillary staff keep ongoing operations running like clockwork.

"The work that the ancillary staff does is something that we do not think about very often... and these are the hidden heroes that we'd like to talk to and engage with today," said Associate Professor Faith Chia, Designated Institutional Official (NHG Residency) in her opening address.



The KTPH facilities manager giving residents a tour of the KTPH rooftop garden

"From the mortuary to security to risk management, landscaping, portering we want to be able to understand how all of us work together, (and) create this system within our hospitals... to allow us to care for our patients," she added.

"These staff, who throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have been working equally if not even harder than the more 'visible' frontline healthcare workers (e.g. doctors and nurses), but may not have received the same degree of appreciation," said Dr Ang Ren Xuan, President, NHG Resident Council (Academic Year 2021/22).

"I hope that today, we can all take one step towards giving our ancillary staff, our 'hidden heroes', the acknowledgement, recognition, and attention they deserve," he added.

"Let us take this opportunity to get to know, and be encouraged by them, interact with them and hear their stories... build relationships as fellow healthcare workers working on the same team, working towards the same goals, and may we all be inspired by the hidden heroes amongst us."

For year-one family medicine resident, Dr Tan Jon Wei, the realisation of what it really meant to be in the "frontlines" stood out to him during his attachment with the patient service officers (PSO).

"More often than not, the next-of-kin (NOK) challenge the PSOs... standing right in front of them demanding to see their family members, often times refusing to leave. (While) we as doctors sometimes make the call to the NOK (through the phone) in our comfy, air-conditioned MO (medical officer) rooms," he said.

"What I took back was... they (PSOs) showed a sense of resilience... abuse is experienced by many of them, but they band together, to support and remind each other that they are just doing their jobs, and (sometimes) are really limited by what they can do... and I think we can really learn from them."

Year-one internal medicine resident, Dr Isaac Peh who is currently posted to the emergency department, shared that it was "fitting" that he was attached to the mortuary department.

"In resus (resuscitation), we do see a fair number of deaths... however, what happens to the deceased patient is something that I don't routinely think about," he said.



Residents getting a taste of managing laundry and linen at TTSH

"After the patient passes away, we start the paper work, update the family, convey our condolences, and move on to the next case... and when we go back, the bay will 'somehow' be emptied out, and that's about the contact exposure that we have with the patient and the family."

"It is quite eye-opening that we get to see what goes on after they (deceased patients) 'leave' us, and the mortuary team essentially are the ones who close the case," he added.

Year-one family medicine resident, Dr Caleb Luo Yang, learnt that the duties of an ambulance crew go beyond just transporting patients.

"With a total manpower of about 11, three shifts a day, and about two crews each shift... that works out to around six crews per day, and one to two crew members on standby... their rest period is quite little," he shared.

"And aside from needing to know how to properly transport patients, they would also need to have some basic medical and resuscitation knowledge, the skillset of an emergency medical technician," he added. "It's really challenging."

"We take the work that they do for granted, many of our ancillary staff are involved in the day-to-day work that ensure the smooth running of our hospitals," said Dr Ang.

"It is because they get the jobs done, that we, doctors can focus on excelling in our work, and (because) they do their jobs so well, that we tend to forget how hard their jobs

actually are, and how much effort that their jobs demand of them."

"Let us take this opportunity to get to know, and be encouraged by them... build relationships as fellow healthcare workers working on the same team, working towards the same goals."

– Dr Ang Ren Xuan, President, NHG Resident Council (Academic Year 2021/22)

The Positive Impact of Peer Recognition

What started out as a peer-nominated award to recognise residents (junior doctors) during the pandemic has since evolved into an award system that also receives nominations from non-medical healthcare colleagues

Dr Brendan Chong, a PGY1 (Postgraduate Year 1) doctor currently undergoing his training at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, was one of the many non-resident recipients of this year's NHG Residency Most Valuable Player (MVP) award. He was recognised by his non-medical colleagues for going through great lengths to help both patients and colleagues.



The NHG Residency MVP's first call for nomination happened in March 2020

Senior Resident (NHG Psychiatry Residency Programme) and NHG Resident Council President (Academic Year 2021/22), Dr Ang Ren Xuan explained that due to the nature of work that the junior doctor does, he/she may work more closely with a multidisciplinary team such as nurses and allied health professionals. "Hence, it would be appropriate for the nomination to come from these members instead of just their medical peers," he said.

One such individual was Dr Khor Yee San, a medical officer from Yishun Community Hospital, who was not only recognised by her physician colleagues, but also her non-medical colleagues for going the extra mile for both her patients and colleagues.

One of her nominators, nurse clinician Kue Chwee Chin, commended Dr Khor for her commitment and compassion towards her patients.

Ms Kue said, "She would attend to her patient promptly whenever she received a call... She would personally come and check her patient, listen and find out why (the) patient (was) not eating... (and) she showed empathy and care to her dying patient, and updated the family members timely even when she was on call."

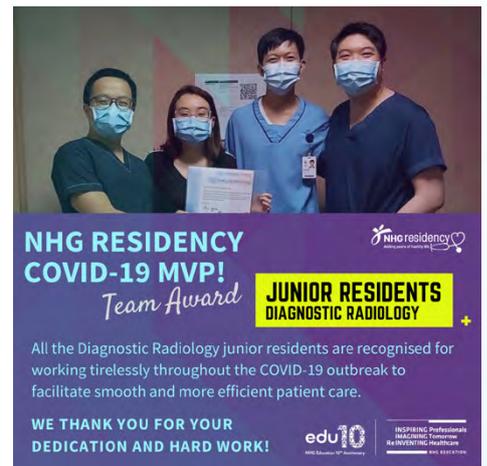
Drs Eu Kar Mun (Senior Resident Physician) and Er Chaozer (Consultant) from Woodlands Health, who also nominated Dr Khor, commended her for being supportive and well-liked by her peers, seniors and other allied health professionals.

"Yee San always tries her very best to provide the necessary assistance to new staff... she is a valuable team member who is supportive, collegial and caring," said Dr Er.

"Yee San is an integral team player. She helps and supports her colleagues, especially those who are less familiar with the system, even putting in time after work to do so... Working with her has been a joy!" echoed Dr Eu.

"We believe that if a recipient receives multiple nominations from different members of a healthcare team, it speaks volume about the consistent standards of excellence that he/she demonstrates in different settings," said Dr Ang.

"(While) we know that the MVP Awards may not be able to capture every single doctor that is giving his/her best in their daily work... we'd also want to emphasise to those who did not receive an award that it does not diminish their hard work and dedication," he added.



The NHG Diagnostic Radiology junior residents were one of the first few to receive the Team MVP awards during the early days of COVID-19

"We hope that having such an award would motivate our fellow residents and junior doctors to not just consistently keep up their good work, but also have confidence that their efforts will not go unnoticed."



Some of this year's NHG Residency MVP recipients. Clockwise from left: Drs Brendon Chong, Heng Li Cheng, Jolene See and Venkataganesan S/O Ponnalagu

NHG Residency Career Day 2022: Thumbs Up for Hybrid

of NHG and the workings of the Singapore healthcare system.

All of which would help them decide on their next steps after graduating from medical school.

"The talks provided me with the clarity on the various specialities that I am interested in. It allowed me to compare it to the programmes here in Australia and provided me with greater confidence to make an informed decision," said Mr See. "I appreciate the effort NHG has taken to include us overseas medical students."

"It helped me to re-evaluate my interests after my experience here in Australia by giving a perspective of how the programme and future prospects are like in Singapore," said Mr Lee.

Ms Sim felt that the sessions better prepared her for work in Singapore, and residency training as an international medical graduate. "I (now) have a clearer idea of what differentiates NHG from the other clusters," she added.

"It allowed me to understand the culture... and have a better sense of the work-life balance (in Singapore) a little better," shared Ms Hyeri Park, a Year 3 medical student at the University of New South Wales, Australia.

In-Person Sessions still Preferred Choice

While the majority of the participants shared that they were generally happy with the hybrid experience, in-person sessions are still their preferred choice.

"I thought that more of the residency talks could have been face-to-face, as I would have preferred to talk to the medical professionals in person," said Ms Yap. "I appreciated that there were some sessions held in person, but those were more formal, 'lecture styled' as it was held in a big auditorium.

"I think that there should be in-person talks or booths on one day, so that medical students have the opportunity to meet other students, doctors, and professors," said Ms Sim.



Dr Faith Chia (Designated Institutional Official, NHG Residency) facilitating the discussion with (second from left) Dr Wu Huei Yaw [Deputy Chairman, Medical Board (Division of Integrated & Community Care), Woodlands Health]; Professor Chin Jing Jih, Chairman Medical Board (Tan Tock Seng Hospital); and Dr Tan Teck Choon, Assistant Chairman Medical Board (Yishun Health).

National Healthcare Group (NHG) Residency Career Day went hybrid for the first time this year, which attracted some 500 local and overseas participants to its online and in-person sessions.

Over three days from 15 to 17 July, the participants had the opportunity to interact with residents and faculty, and learn more about the 27 residency programmes and career opportunities that NHG has to offer.

While most of the sessions happened online, the medical students engagement session and career opportunities by NHG institutional leadership were held in-person on Saturday, 16 July.

Hybrid - Inclusive, Engaging and Far Reaching

The participants gave their stamp of approval for the hybrid format, especially for those who tuned in from overseas.

Mr Darren See, a Year 3 medical student at Monash University (MU), Australia, appreciated being able to attend the event remotely from Melbourne.

"I like how two separate sessions were conducted for online and physical audiences. A hybrid model was great as it gives people more options to engage in the event, and opens up more avenues for people who are staying remotely (or overseas) to tune in," he said.

"Though it would have been nice to attend a physical career day and meet people face-to-face, having it online was most suitable for overseas students, such as myself, who are interested in coming back to Singapore after graduation."

Year 5 MU medical student and President of Singapore Medical Society of Australia and New Zealand (AY2022), Mr Lee Wai Kit, who also tuned in from Melbourne, shared the same

sentiment, "I think it's a good opportunity for those who are overseas to attend the online sessions; especially medical students studying in Australia, where semester timelines are different from that of Singapore."

For Year 3 medical student at King's College London (KCL), United Kingdom, Ms Charmaine Sim who was in Singapore for her semester break shared, "I quite liked how there was



The Medical Students Connect session was held physically at Centre for Healthcare Innovation and streamed live

an option to choose between online and in-person talks, as I could adapt it to fit my schedule."

"The option of having it online was very convenient, especially if participants opted to attend events that were on different days at different timings," said fellow Year 3 KCL medical student Ms Audrey Yap, who also tuned in from Singapore.

The Deciding Factor

The key thing for the majority of the overseas participants, was not the fact that the hybrid career day allowed them to attend the sessions per se, but being able to gain a better understanding



Participants dialed in from as far as Australia and New Zealand to attend the programme engagement sessions

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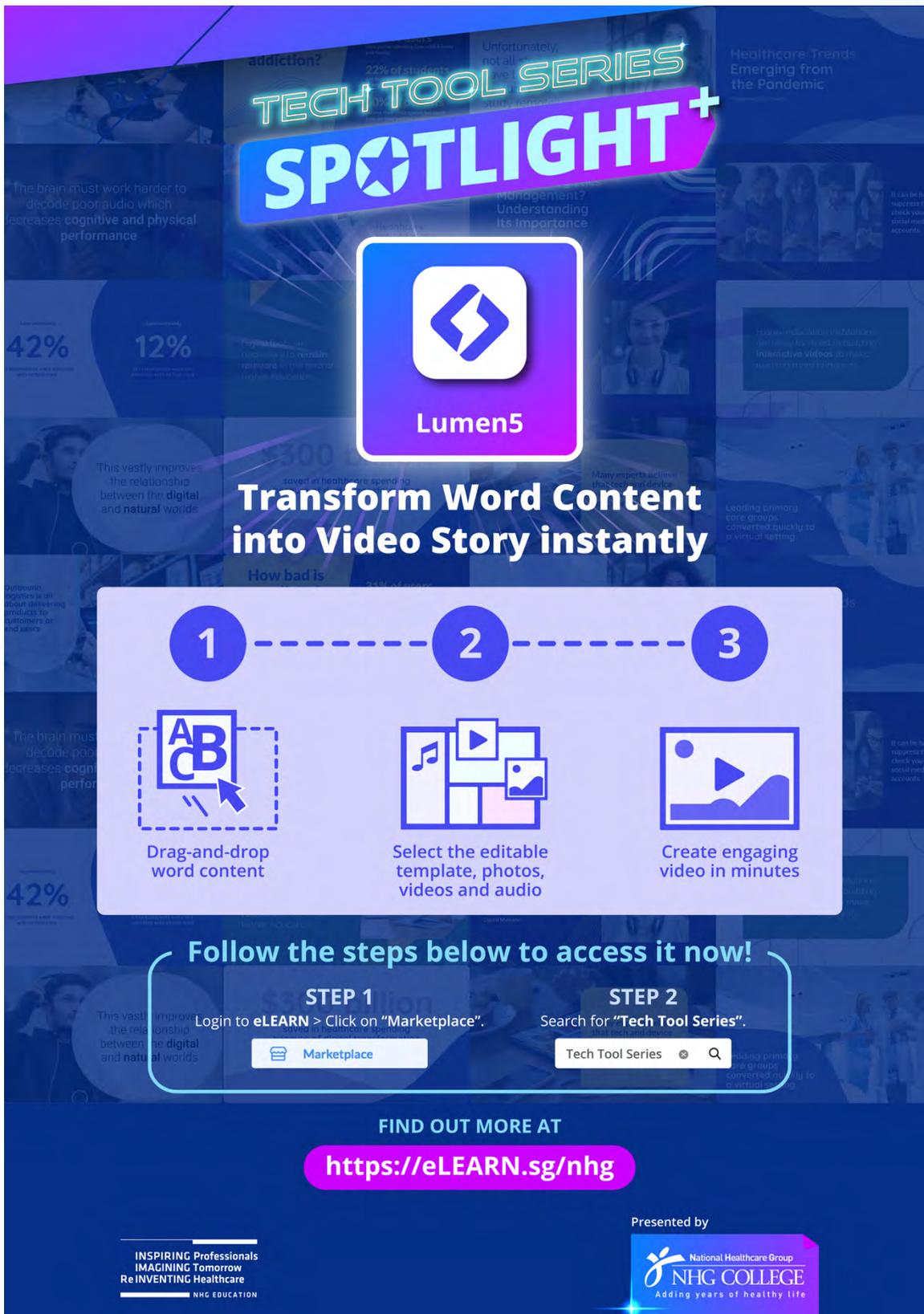


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