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CLOSING THE LOOP ON SCREENING

The Health Promotion Board brings screening to the doorstep of Whampoa residents and launches its General Practitioner Network to help residents manage their conditions

In a bid to increase the number of elderly residents being screened for chronic diseases and cancers, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) has launched a community screening programme that makes important screenings easily accessible to residents in the heartlands. At the same time, the Board is launching its newly-minted General Practitioner (GP) network to ensure that patients receive follow-up treatment and care. Residents in Whampoa are the first to benefit from the programme that will eventually be rolled out to other areas in Singapore.

2 Launched at a community event at Whampoa Constituency, the one-stop screening programme will offer screening for key chronic conditions – diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and obesity, and selected cancers – breast, cervical and colorectal cancers. To encourage more residents to take up screening, HPB has worked with the private sector, Whampoa Wellness Programme and the Whampoa grassroots organisations to bring down the costs of the tests and subsequent follow-ups for needy elderly residents.

3 Upon registering for screening, HPB's Health Ambassadors will help residents to nominate a physician – either his family GP, or a GP listed in the network. If the resident is unsure, he will be assigned to a GP from the network, located closest to his home. The nominated GPs will be informed of residents with abnormal screening results so that they can call the patient for a follow-up consultation. This will ensure that everyone with abnormal screening results will be followed-up by a GP.

4 “We have found that some key barriers to going for screening and follow-up consultations are cost and convenience. To address this, HPB has collaborated with the people, public and private sectors to bring Whampoa residents a one-stop screening service, at a subsidised rate. For example, screening for diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and lipid disorders will be available for \$2 at this event, as compared to \$30 at a commercial rate. HPB has worked with screening service providers such as the National Healthcare Group Diagnostics, the Singapore Cancer Society and the Whampoa Consultative Citizens Committee to make screening affordable,” said Mr Ang Hak Seng, CEO, Health Promotion Board.

5 “To encourage senior citizens to go for follow-up consultations, lower income patients who qualify under the Primary Care Partnership Scheme (PCPS) will also benefit from primary care subsidy when they visit the GPs in the network. Residents will be able to sign up for this scheme at the event,” he added. “GPs are key figures who are able to influence screening and follow-up at the community level. Hence, the Health Promotion Board has collaborated with GPs in Whampoa to form a dynamic network to link GPs with their local community in the fight against chronic diseases. As a start, nine Whampoa GPs have signed up to be part of the GP network.

6 “As this programme makes its way to other constituencies in Singapore, we hope to see least 80 per cent of the residents with abnormal screening results attending follow-up consultations with their doctors,” said Mr Ang.

7 “This network gives GPs a chance to have greater contact with the community. It helps foster closer doctor-patient relations and gives us the opportunity to know our patients at a more personal level other than just during consultations. This will also definitely work towards better outcomes in helping patients manage their chronic conditions and general wellbeing,” said Dr Philip Koh, Deputy Medical Director of Healthway Medical Group, and Healthway Medical Clinic participating in the Whampoa GP Network.

8 In addition, HPB is piloting a software developed by HPB’s Physical Activity Centre of Excellence, which helps doctors recommend exercises for their patients according to their ages and conditions, including diabetes, hypertension and obesity. Called the Physical Activity Advice Tool or PAAT, this evidence-based assessment involves a quick interview with the patient, after which a report is generated listing suggestions for the types of activities suitable for the patient. The tailored physical activity advice generated from the PAAT is based on the HPB National Physical Activity Guidelines and international clinical

best practise guidelines. Regular physical activity plays a direct role in not just reducing the incidence of many chronic conditions, but it also helps those with existing chronic conditions, manage their conditions better. As part of the network, these GPs will also have on hand, a list of activities that are available at the Whampoa Community Club to provide the patient with immediate options.

9 Fringe activities at the community event include carnival games and food stalls to promote and raise awareness of the importance of screening and a healthy lifestyle in a fun and interactive way. Health ambassadors will be on hand to facilitate games and talk to the community about health issues such as physical activity and chronic disease management.

10 “We want our seniors to stay active and healthy, make friends and enjoy life. We believe that health screenings and follow-ups with a doctor when necessary will help our seniors keep their good health longer. This is why the Whampoa grassroots are partnering HPB and our neighbourhood network of GPs in this initiative. I appreciate our partners, and look forward to sustaining this effort together to benefit our elderly residents,” Senior Minister of State and Member of Parliament for Whampoa, Mr Heng Chee How said.

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