



**Singapore Healthcare
Management 2022**

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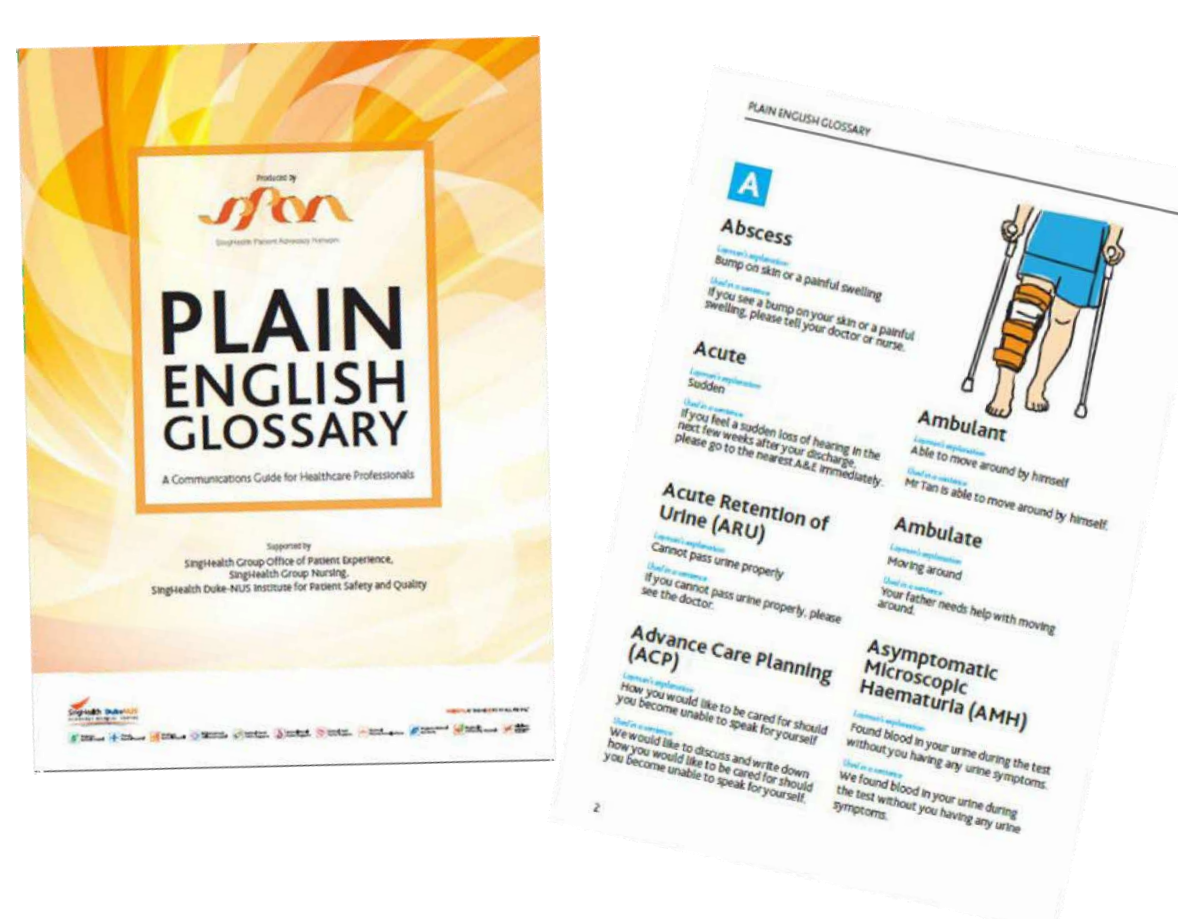
Plain English Glossary by SingHealth Patient Advocacy Network (SPAN)

BACKGROUND

SPAN's earlier engagements with patient support groups and nurse leads in 2017 sparked concern over a common feedback from attendees – that communication was a key area to be improved, as patients and families often shared that they were unable to fully understand explanations by healthcare professionals (HCWs) on their medical conditions and treatment plans. Further probing led to the realisation that prevalent use of medical terminologies and jargon was the key reason.

About SPAN

Started in 2017 as an initiative to tap into patient representation by SingHealth Duke-NUS Institute for Patient Safety & Quality (IPSQ), SPAN is a self-driven network of patients and caregivers that represents the collective voice of patients. Working in partnership with IPSQ, SingHealth Group Office of Patient Experience and the healthcare team, SPAN provides important patient perspectives, actively champions initiatives and gives inputs on how SingHealth can improve the experience of patients and families.



METHODOLOGY

While HCWs try to be as accurate as possible when explaining, they may not be fully understood by patients and families due to the use of complex medical terms. To tackle this issue, the idea of a Plain English Glossary was conceived to help HCWs understand the importance of communicating with patients in layman terms. The best people to put together such a glossary would therefore, be patients/caregivers themselves, and SPAN quickly got to work. **In October 2019, the Plain English Glossary was launched to:**

❖ Raise awareness of communication barriers & offer solution

- Help HCWs understand how the prevalent use of medical jargon can impact care outcomes
- The glossary serves as a tool and guide to reinforce the importance of speaking in layman language so that communication is easily understood



Scan to hear from patient advocates why jargon impacts communication

❖ Educate Staff and Patients/Families

- Enhancing the communications culture in SingHealth through training using the glossary as a tool, starting with **onboarding sessions for new nurses**
- To serve as a **reference for patients and families**, providing explanations to commonly used medical jargons. This will improve understanding and involvement of patients and families, helping them become empowered and active partners in the care journey
- Glossary made easily available as a **resource for staff and patients** on both Infopedia and online

❖ Provide a credible and sustainable source of reference

- List of 150 commonly used words were first **compiled in collaboration with over 40 patient organisations** across SingHealth institutions, making it an initiative **for patients, by patients**. Accuracy of translations to simpler terms was then ensured through **verification of medical terms by an editorial panel comprising HCWs** across professions familiar with patient care
- Taking into consideration the target audience of the general patient in the community, the **translation to simpler terms was pegged at a Primary Six literacy level to ensure easy understanding** by patients and caregivers

AIM

To help HCWs develop greater empathy for patients and their families, and be able to communicate effectively, improving overall patient experience.

Given the vulnerability of patients as they recover from their conditions, HCWs who are able to connect with them at their level by putting themselves in the patient's shoes, will build trust and enable patients/families to step up as equal partners in the care process. **The goal is to cultivate a patient culture where they are not afraid of asking and clarifying with healthcare teams whenever they are unclear/unsure about what was communicated to them, leading to enhanced health outcomes.**

RESULTS

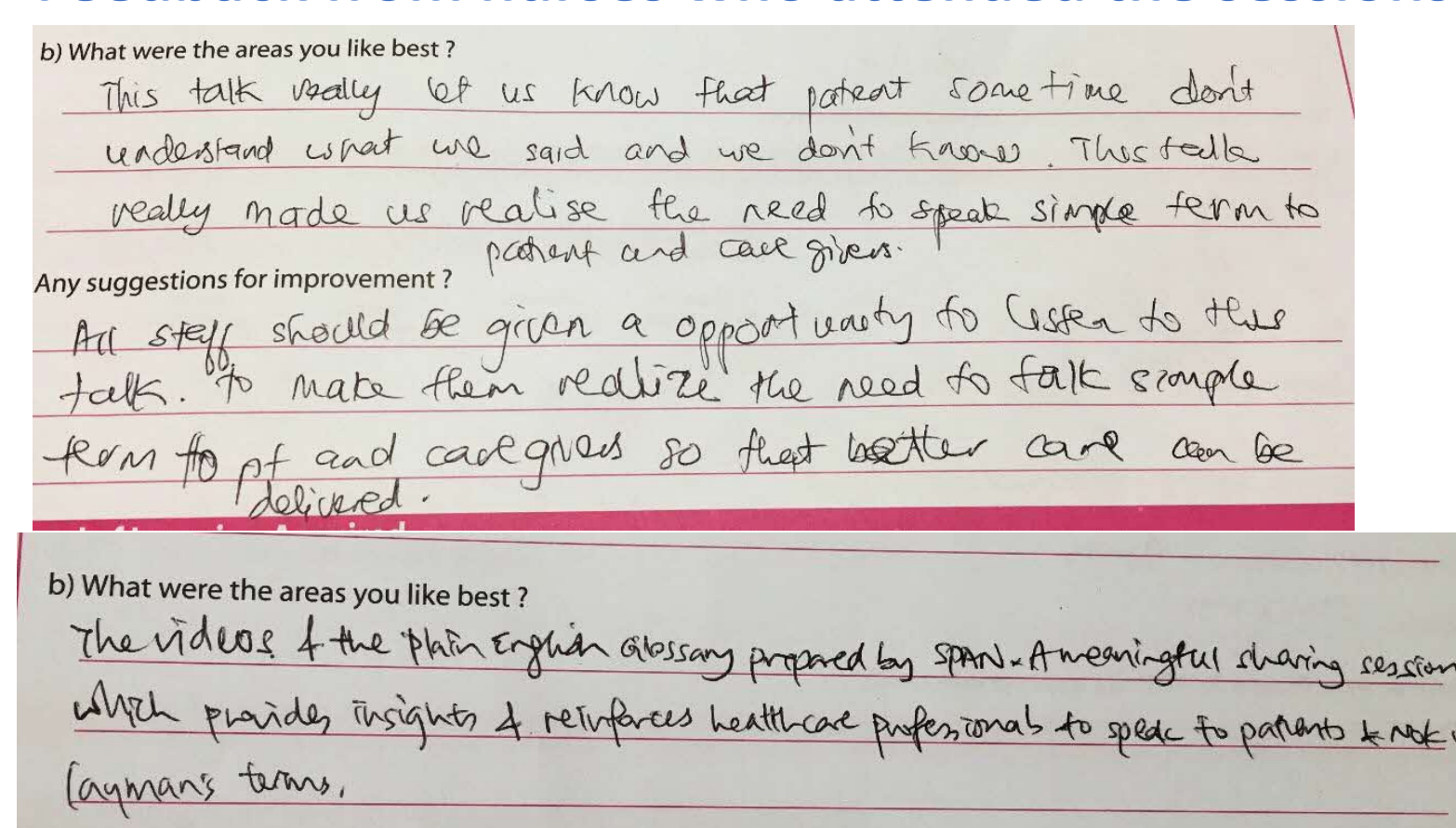
Changing the way people communicate involves a mindset and culture shift, which is often the most challenging aspect of transformation. But this process is necessary to ensure constant improvement with the patient's benefit in mind. As such, work and outreach has to commence from areas that will impact the future of healthcare.

❖ Training the future generation of HCWs and leaders

- Over 1700 nurses and Patient Care Ambassadors trained through close to 30 compulsory onboarding sessions for new and in-service nurses, and ambassadors. To better present the patient's perspective, SPAN members were invited to conduct these sessions.
- About 4500 SingHealth Residents, faculty members and administrators through SingHealth Residency's communication channel



Feedback from nurses who attended the sessions



Scan to download the Plain English Glossary

* Patient Care Ambassadors are flight attendants from local airlines who were re-deployed to healthcare during the pandemic.

❖ Media and Public Interest

- The glossary has garnered a steady flow of interest and was featured in Lianhe Zaobao on 7 Nov 2021, extending its reach to the wider audience
- Featured in Tomorrow's Medicine website, with caregivers writing in to request for the glossary



CONCLUSION

The Plain English Glossary project by SPAN is an excellent example of how the healthcare-patient partnership can positively impact patient care and experience. Tapping on the patient's voice, HCWs are able to better grasp circumstances from the patient's perspective and provide true patient-centred care. Since 2019,

- new nurses would have been adequately trained before they officially start work
- new SingHealth Residents would have received the glossary for use as a guide as they progress
- staff have access to the glossary on Infopedia and the IPSQ website

These are huge steps that demonstrate the impact and sustainability of the glossary and how the **collaborative effort across healthcare domains that was initiated by SPAN**, has led to a movement towards creating a healthcare system that is **truly for patients, by patients**.