

## **Project Title**

Job Redesign – Patient Service Associates (PSA)

## **Project Lead and Members**

Project lead: Michael Leow

Project members: Vivien Chan Choi In; Low Tan Ling; Lim Siew Geok; Tay Yen Cheng;  
Lee Ying Teng; Ng Wee Boon; Sandy Chai; Dr Siddhartha Sanyal, Ang Wenting

## **Organisation(s) Involved**

Tan Tock Seng Hospital

## **Healthcare Family Group(s) Involved in this Project**

Ancillary Care

## **Applicable Specialty or Discipline**

Patient Service Associates (in all settings e.g. outpatient, inpatient, ED, OT etc.)

## **Project Period**

Start date: Ongoing

## **Aims**

The PSA Framework was purposed to drive the career development of PSAs through job redesign, engage our PSAs and effectively manage their sense of professional identity.

## **Background**

With the increasing demand and complexity of healthcare services, it is important for TTSH to adopt new approaches and equip its workforce with necessary capabilities to meet the evolving needs and challenges in healthcare. Among the crucial workforces undergoing job redesign to keep abreast of changes are the Patient Service Associates

(PSAs). PSAs play a vital role across various healthcare settings, including inpatient and outpatient care, emergency departments, and operating theatres. Traditionally limited to administrative tasks such as registration and billing, PSAs are upskilled to take on a more active role in delivering clinical care to our patients with the redesigning of care processes, and introduction of automation, etc. This translates to better career progression and job satisfaction for PSAs.

## Methods

TTSH has embarked on a 10-year transformation journey to upskill our PSAs, redesign their roles to perform higher value-added functions, expand their career pathways with greater opportunities for career progression and development, and build a strong identity for TTSH's PSAs. TTSH was the first hospital to implement the PSA Framework that incorporates Value Added Service (VAS) to upskill PSAs competently to take on higher level skillsets including basic clinical tasks traditionally undertaken by nurses, phlebotomists and pharmacy technicians. This transformation journey was further catalysed with the formation of the MOH Job, Skills and Training (JST) workgroups in May 2022, which TTSH is leading on outpatient aspects with representatives from the other clusters. TTSH together with the rest of the clusters have been working closely with MOH and Healthcare Service Employee's Union (HSEU) to formulate sector-wide strategies in these areas to ensure better career progression and advancement with job satisfaction: a. Job redesign for PSAs (i.e. blending clinical tasks with administrative tasks) b. Harmonisation of skillsets and competencies (i.e. a list of clinical tasks that could be performed by PSAs have been identified and harmonised across the clusters) c. Universal accreditation of training (i.e. harmonised trainings are curated specially for PSAs, and conducted by Continuing Education and Training (CET) Centres (i.e. NTUC LearningHub and HMI Institute). The trainings are accredited by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) and will be recognised nationally by all healthcare institutions) d. Review of Career Development Pathway (i.e. enhanced career development pathway for PSAs on redesigned roles, e.g. PSAs can progress up to JG13) e. Accelerated promotion pathway for PSAs who have achieved the required clinical and role competency of the next job

grades. f. Review of remuneration (pending further discussion) g. Review of job titles (i.e. job titles up till JG10 will be harmonised across clusters; all TTSH PSAs should see an upgrade in their existing job titles) These are expected to be operationalised across all Public Healthcare Institutions (PHIs), from 1 April 2024. In order to ensure the success of these initiatives, our management consulted widely, and put the welfare and ground sentiments of the workers at the centre of its transformation efforts. Its focus on seeking ground feedback, and gaining buy-in from staff was the critical success ingredient of its change management process. This was done through various platforms such as fireside chats with PSAs, bi-monthly PSA Framework meetings with PSA leads and Ops, and bi-annual townhall sessions (i.e. Kampung Ties), where there is open two-way communication between PSAs and the management. A series of engagement sessions was also held with line Managers, Senior Management and relevant Departments (e.g. People Development, Outpatient Management Unit) to ensure a holistic framework and implementation plan that meet the institution's needs.

## Results

TTSH is at the forefront of the sectoral job redesign effort for support care staff, given that we have already embarked on this journey for our PSAs more than 10 years ago. Our PSA Framework was well-established, incorporating VAS to upskill PSAs competently to take on higher level skillsets including basic clinical tasks traditionally undertaken by nurses, phlebotomists and pharmacy technicians. To date, 22 VAS have been set up, with 45% of their PSAs trained in at least 1 VAS. Clinic PSAs are now trained to perform tasks such as phlebotomy, electrocardiogram, and basic eye test; whilst ward PSAs are trained to take on routine nursing work in the discharge process, such as the removal of intravenous cannula. The "PSA for PSA" framework has been well received by PSAs, with greater job satisfaction and empowerment. The upskilling of PSAs to take on a more active role in the delivery of care for patients, has also allowed the nurses to practice at the top of their license. Moving forward, with the roll-out of the MOH JST Framework, our PSAs will benefit from the structured training programmes that are curated specially for them. We also target to train up to 80% of

our PSAs in basic clinic skills within the next 3 years, so that more of our PSAs can be on redesigned roles.

## **Lessons Learnt**

Communications is the key to a successful implementation. It is important to consult widely, and put the welfare and ground sentiments of the employees at the centre of the transformation effort. In addition, it is important to onboard the relevant stakeholders to the transformation journey early, so that the strategies/plans formulated can address their needs and are well supported by them.

## **Conclusion**

Change is the constant, especially in healthcare industry. It is important to keep up with latest developments within the industry and turn potential challenges into opportunities. With our continuous effort in the PSA Job Redesign journey, TTSH has successfully transformed our PSA workforce into one that is agile, and ready for evolving demands and needs.

## **Additional Information**

- Asian Hospital Management Awards, Human Resource Development Category - Gold Award 2015
- The Excellence in Public Service Awards (ExPSA), Organisation Development Category - Best Practice Award 2015
- NTUC May Day Awards 2023 – Plaque of Commendation (Gold)

## **Project Category**

Workforce Transformation

Job Redesign, Upskilling

## **Keywords**

Job Scope, Workforce Productivity

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## PATIENT SERVICE ASSOCIATES

Our Patient Service Associates (PSAs) are often the first people our patients meet in their care journey with us. In the clinics, they perform critical tasks such as appointment booking, registration and billing. The myriad of roles played by our PSAs - from assisting doctors, to discharging patients and conducting financial counselling, as well as care coordination, demonstrate the importance of their role in delivering care to our patients.

Aside from their core administrative duties, clinic PSAs are now trained to perform phlebotomy, electrocardiograms (ECG), and basic eye tests – tasks that were previously performed only by nurses. The PSA Framework was initiated around eight years ago, referencing the Innovation Cycle model in its approach.

This framework was purposed to drive the career development of PSAs through job redesign, engage our PSAs and effectively manage their sense of professional identity. These efforts have led to improvements in staff performance and patients' perception of our patient care and service levels.

Under the PSA Framework, three career pathways were developed:

- I. Management and Administration
- II. Training and Development
- III. Clinical

Value-Added-Service (VAS) training opportunities were also developed as part of these pathways, with more than half of the hospital's PSAs benefitting from them.

In 2017, the ward PSAs started to take on routine nursing work in the discharge process. Through training, PSAs are equipped with clinical skills such as the removal of intravenous cannulae. The upskilling of our PSAs has reduced the waiting time of our patients' discharge and facilitated swift admission of new patients waiting in the Emergency Department (ED).

With the PSAs supporting routine nursing activities, our nurses can then better focus on direct patient care, which contributes to improved patient safety and quality of care.



A PSA performing a phlebotomy as part of the job redesign initiative.

“ I am thankful to be given the opportunity to upskill through training and perform the discharge process over and above my routine tasks. ”

**Ms Junaidah Bte Kamis**  
Senior Patient Service Associate

Since implementation, the attrition rate of PSAs has dropped by half, manpower savings amounting to 12.6 PSA-Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) and 9.9 Nurse-FTE have also been observed.