

LOOKING BEYOND FINANCING

– Restructuring Healthcare Delivery in Singapore

By National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre



One in five Singaporeans will be over the age of 65 by 2030, requiring greater medical attention and help. This will pose not just a threat financially, but also one of service provision. Measures announced at the National Day Rally last month are encouraging and will help ease the financial burden of healthcare on the citizens. However, these measures only address part of the issue. To alleviate rapidly growing healthcare demands, we need to rethink the way services are delivered.

Health is an outcome of multiple factors such as physical and social environments, infrastructure, preventive care through education, family-based care, and so on. It is thus important to look at health holistically in a social setting, rather than just a medical one. With this change in perspective of health, more sustainable healthcare delivery solutions, which tap into resources within the community, can be devised.

Medical professionals, as the most critical points of contact for the patients and their families in the healthcare system, play an important role in transforming healthcare delivery. The World Health Organization suggests following qualities in a “Five Star Doctor” (which can also be extended to other medical professionals) – care provider, decision maker, communicator, manager and community leader. The role of medical professionals needs to grow, in terms of providing medical care, as well as social and mental care. Their roles as community leaders and managers need to be encouraged as well, to ensure better health outcomes not just for the patients, but also for the community at large. With the new healthcare policies, it is an opportune time to reiterate the larger role of the community,

especially medical professionals, to ensure that healthcare is a collective responsibility with solutions lying in not just policy level decisions, but also in medical care delivery.

To help doctors fulfill a larger role in care provision, medical professionals should be encouraged to volunteer with voluntary welfare organisations, providing subsidised or pro bono services and promoting preventive care practices. To help family members and the community become

“Human, financial and infrastructural resources will continue to constrain healthcare delivery. As such, innovative, concerted and holistic interventions are needed to ensure better health outcomes for Singaporeans.”

better home care providers, medical professionals could invest in building their capacities. These members could later step up as care providers for others in need within the community. This will allow patients to stay at home longer, help them maintain better social health, and ease the pressure on institutional care providers. Professional bodies such as SMA could mobilise medical professionals and provide them with more avenues to fulfill their roles in the community. This is aligned with the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre's (NVPC) mission to promote engaged communities through volunteering. We believe that if individuals take ownership in their communities, there will be far-reaching social benefits.

Human, financial and infrastructural resources will continue to constrain healthcare delivery. As such, innovative, concerted and holistic interventions are needed to ensure better health outcomes for Singaporeans. Medical professionals have an important and critical role to play in helping to meet the escalating demand for healthcare and therefore their role in the community needs to be restructured. **SMA**



NVPC leads and catalyses transformational initiatives in volunteerism and philanthropy to build more engaged and compassionate communities in Singapore. Visit <http://www.nvpc.org.sg> to find out more about what we do.

SMA and SMA Charity Fund support volunteerism among our profession to make a positive difference in the lives of the less fortunate. This space in *SMA News* is provided to the charitable organisation on a complimentary basis. To find out more, please email news@sma.org.sg.

For more opportunities to give back, please visit our SMA Cares webpage at <http://www.sma.org.sg/smacades/index.aspx?ID=82>.