



The Straits Times
15 March 2018
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NUH senior enrolled nurse Nurhidah Afendi performing a diabetic retinal photography service for Mr Abdul Razak Abdul Rahman at Keat Hong Family Medicine Clinic. The 58-year-old diabetes patient said he finds the clinic more convenient than polyclinics for his medical check-ups. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Faster, affordable care at clinic for chronic conditions

Felicia Choo

A clinic offering affordable and faster care has been a boon for Choa Chu Kang residents with chronic conditions since it opened in April last year.

Keat Hong Family Medicine Clinic helps patients manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and also provides physiotherapy, ultrasound scans and health screenings.

The clinic sees nearly 1,500 patients every month, 60 per cent of whom have chronic conditions.

Besides walk-in patients, it also gets patients who are referred by a hospital or polyclinic. Close to 2,500 patients have chosen to have their cases transferred there from the nearby Choa Chu Kang polyclinic.

One advantage of the clinic is its shorter waiting time, said Dr Loke Kam Weng, the clinic's director.

"The average waiting time differs... but we probably can see patients within 20 minutes, and they

should be able to collect their medicine within 40 minutes."

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong, who was the guest of honour at the clinic's official opening yesterday, and Mr Zaqy Mohamad, an MP for Chua Chu Kang GRC, were given a tour of the premises.

The clinic is a public-private partnership between the National University Health System and Trilink Healthcare. It is one of eight family medicine clinics funded by the Health Ministry as part of its Beyond Hospital to Community push to make primary care more accessible to Singaporeans.

These clinics pool general practitioners together to provide treatment for chronic conditions and services, such as physiotherapy, which are usually found only in hospitals.

The 607 sq m clinic, which offers subsidised care under the Community Health Assist Scheme (Chas) and the Pioneer Generation Package, also treats common ailments such as flu.

Its consultation and medication costs are similar to those at poly-

clinics. Patients holding a Blue Chas card pay \$12 for a long consultation at the clinic, while it costs the same at polyclinics due to other government subsidies.

Pioneer Generation patients pay \$5 for the same consultation compared to \$3.50 at polyclinics. Without any subsidies, a long consultation costs \$53.50 at the Keat Hong clinic.

From June, Keat Hong Family Medicine Clinic will become the first family medicine clinic to treat patients with non-complex eye conditions such as early cataract, stable glaucoma and mild to moderate retinopathy, in partnership with National University Hospital's (NUH) ophthalmology department.

Diabetes patient Abdul Razak Abdul Rahman, 58, finds the clinic more convenient than polyclinics for his check-ups. "It's very smooth and... very fast. I can get everything checked at one go," said the member relations officer, who has had Type 2 diabetes for the past three years.

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