

Empowering Our GPs Early in the COVID-19 Fight

by A/Prof Low Lian Leng, Director, SingHealth Office of Regional Health, SGH Campus
Adeline Kwan Li Feng, SingHealth Community Hospitals

Just a day shy of Chinese New Year Eve in January, when most families were preparing for their holiday ahead or the annual reunion dinner – albeit a muted one this year in view of the escalating outbreak situation in Wuhan – the first COVID-19 patient reached our shores. It added to what was already a sombre mood at home, where most would have spent their time catching up on news on the developing situation of the virus amidst the festivities. There was

however, no time to lose. In preparation for possible spread of the virus, the Ministry of Health contacted SingHealth Office of Regional Health to assist in mask fitting of its GP clinic partners. This was a mask fitting exercise that was done much earlier, before the activation of over 900 GP clinics for Public Health Preparedness Clinics (PHPCs) that started from the third week of February.



Teams from Clinical Networks, SingHealth Office of Regional Health and SingHealth Community Hospitals, all ready for the mask fitting exercise.



Nurse from SingHealth Community Hospitals (SCH) showing the correct way of wearing the mask

Respiratory fit test begins

Testing to see if there is any leakage

(continued on the next page)

(continued from Page 15: Empowering our GPs Early in the Covid-19 Fight)



Taking every step seriously to ensure that mask type and fit is well for all

Images courtesy of SingHealth Community Hospitals and Clinical Networks Team, SingHealth Office of Regional Health

Colleagues from the Clinical Networks team at SingHealth Office of Regional Health sprang into quick action starting from Chinese New Year’s Eve and over the first two days of Chinese New Year, steadfastly contacting over 170 GPs to arrange for mask fitting sessions during the holiday period. Early mask fitting was critical as patients who potentially have the virus could visit their GP unknowingly, and GPs must be prepared then. By mid-February, teams from SingHealth Office of Regional Health, together with SingHealth Community Hospitals and SingHealth Polyclinics, had conducted more than 10 mask fitting sessions and mask fitted over 300 GPs and clinic assistants from the SingHealth DOT¹ Primary Care Network and iPCARE² Network. The team included locations in the community such as Kreta Ayer Community Club as well, to better reach out to our GP partners. GP partners, together with their clinic assistants, were appreciative of timely assistance and outreach to ensure each individual was fitted with the

right mask model. The teams from SingHealth are glad to be part of the early efforts in enabling our GP community in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ SingHealth DOT (Delivering on Target) Primary Care Network is a programme that right sites patients with stable chronic conditions from SOCs to partnering GPs.

² iPCARE (Integrated Primary Care for At-Risk Elders) is a programme that empowers GPs with community hospital resources such as case managers and allied health professionals to transit elderly, socially complex inpatients to the community, and anchoring them with GPs.

■ CM

“Cough and Cold” and Covid — A GP's reflections

by Adj Asst Prof Chan Hian Hui Vincent, FCFP(S)

These days it would seem that the simplest case, is also the hardest. All these years, I would hear about how the College has been fighting the notion of General Practitioners (GPs) being “mere cough and cold doctors”. That we are much more. That we can and are trained to be Family Medicine specialists, capable on taking on the most complex of cases. Yet as I sit in the clinic, alarmed at the dramatic collapse in healthcare demand, I realise that the world is being held hostage by a “cough and cold” called COVID-19.

Initial Fear

The evening clinic session of 29th January 2020 began like any other. Then at about 8pm, one of the patients exclaimed that there were 2 confirmed cases in Lorong Lew Lian. What started as some serious disease many thousands of kilometres away has arrived in Singapore, and more specifically, arrived right here in my neighbourhood. A chill ran up my spine. No, they were not our patients for we were on leave over the Chinese New Year period,