

# Academy to help meet changing healthcare needs of elderly

*Launch of Family Medicine Academy will help train, groom more doctors to treat people with chronic conditions*

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**SINGAPORE** – Across nine polyclinics run by the National Healthcare Group, the bulk of patients suffering from chronic conditions are aged between 45 and 74 — a clear indication of the changing healthcare needs and demands of an ageing population, according to Health Ministry Permanent Secretary Tan Ching Yee.

Speaking at the official opening of Singapore's first Family Medicine Academy at Bukit Batok Polyclinic yesterday, she noted that the proportion of Singapore's population aged 65 and above will more than double to 20 per cent.

“Our healthcare needs will rise and change. ‘Change’ because we will need to look after people with chronic conditions, help them manage well, so that they can continue to have a good quality of life,” Mrs Tan said.

While the ministry is expanding the capacity and reach of primary care for Singaporeans, she stressed that well-trained doctors are needed within the community.

Thus, the opening of the academy will help train and groom more doctors to meet the rising demands in family medicine, Mrs Tan said.

“With our rapidly ageing popu-



Mrs Tan Ching Yee touring the Family Medicine Academy at Bukit Batok Polyclinic.

PHOTO: NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS

lation, primary care will play an increasingly crucial role in the years to come,” she added.

Professor Chee Yam Cheng, Group CEO of National Healthcare Group, also noted a shift in the focus of medicine in recent years — from one that is reactive and focuses merely on caring for the sick, to one which focuses more on preventive care, patient empowerment and keeping the population healthy, he said.

Among the first to be trained at the academy would be the pioneering cohort of 54 students from the new Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKC-Medicine) at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

They will spend a week of their first semester of Year One at the polyclinics, with the Family Medicine Academy as their base of training within the community.

The academy is jointly set up by LKC-Medicine and National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP).

“We hope the early exposure to primary care will leave a deep imprint on the students and encourage more to seriously consider making family medicine a career as they contribute to Singapore's healthcare system,” said Adjunct Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, Senior Director of Family Medicine Development and Education Director at the NHGP and at LKC-Medicine.

The academy contains a clinical skills laboratory for students to gain practical skills in primary care procedures, and consultation rooms for students to learn and practice their clinical examination skills on site.

Medical students from other universities will also be able to use the facility, said Mrs Tan.