

National database on diabetes in the works

It will give doctors better picture of patients' medical history, help them identify those at high risk

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A national diabetes database is in the offing as the authorities gear up for battle after declaring war against the chronic disease.

The database is expected to give doctors a better picture of their patients' medical history, helping them make decisions as well as identify and counsel high-risk patients.

It was announced by Minister of State for Health Chee Hong Tat at the opening of the Singapore

CONSOLIDATING DATA

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH
CHEE HONG TAT

Health and Biomedical Congress yesterday.

"This database will consolidate data from multiple, different sources, including existing databases in our healthcare institutions, so that we can make the best possible use of our data," said Mr Chee.

He noted that there is a need for the database, which will be developed by the Ministry of Health (MOH), as existing information is not linked.

"Not only is the data not connected to each other, but also, the data in each database is a little different from each other, making comparisons of data across different databases difficult," he said.

MOH will also be able to monitor and evaluate the impact of its policies and programmes on diabetes prevalence, health outcomes and healthcare utilisation, he said.

Mr Chee did not say what kind of data will be pooled, but added that there is a lot of data on diabetes in multiple repositories at the ministry and healthcare institutions.

He did not say when the database is likely to be ready.

Currently, more than 400,000 Singaporeans have diabetes. If nothing is done, one in three Singaporeans – or more than one million – are expected to get the chronic disease in their lifetime, prompting Health Minister Gan Kim Yong to declare war on diabetes in Parliament in April.



A diabetic patient undergoing dialysis treatment. More than 400,000 Singaporeans have diabetes and, if nothing is done, one in three Singaporeans – or more than one million – are expected to get the chronic disease in their lifetime. ST FILE PHOTO

Yesterday, Mr Chee also announced that Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the National Healthcare Group (NHG) will jointly set up two research centres.

The Centre for Primary Health Care Research and Innovation will look at introducing new technologies and creative ways of delivering quality family medicine and primary care for patients.

The Games for Health Innovation Centre will look at serious games that can be used to motivate patients to take greater ownership and care of their health.

In a joint statement, NTU and NHG said also that the two organisa-

tions have started an interdisciplinary research partnership for infectious diseases. They will focus on outbreak management, evidence-based treatment and the monitoring of infectious diseases.

Top on the list of diseases they will address are Zika, dengue and antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis.

An early project will focus on the development of point-of-care tests, which allow rapid diagnostic tests to be done outside the laboratory and within the community.

The tests will allow healthcare professionals to make quick decisions on treatment or the need for further tests, and will save time and

facilitate the testing of individuals in a more proactive way, the statement said.

NTU president Bertil Andersson said critical issues arising from a rapidly ageing population and emerging infectious diseases can be tackled through the collaboration.

"Many solutions require interdisciplinary approaches and NTU's medical school will draw on the expertise of our other schools and research institutes, such as those in life sciences and engineering, in this partnership with NHG doctors," he said.

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