

New postgraduate training ecosystem for physiotherapists

Zhaki Abdullah
Correspondent

Physiotherapists here aiming to up-skill themselves can tap a new training ecosystem developed by NHG Health and Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Launched on Oct 23, Rehabilitation will feature a three-tiered training structure, which aims to provide physiotherapists with a clear progression pathway as well as equip senior physiotherapists with the skills to take on expanded, higher-level roles.

It includes a residency programme for physiotherapists conducted by NTU's Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine), which combines classroom training with workplace-based supervision.

The programme aims to build advanced competencies in managing cardiopulmonary, neuro-geriatric and musculoskeletal-orthopaedic conditions. It is open to physiotherapists from all organisations.

Training for the programme will be conducted over 2½ years, with therapists earning a graduate certificate from LKCMedicine after the first year.

The next 1½ years will lead to a FlexiMasters certification, equivalent to a graduate diploma.

The first intake for the residency programme, which aims to enrol 104 therapists across four cohorts, will commence in July 2026.

Those who complete the residency programme will be able to move on to a one-year Master of Science in Rehabilitation Health programme, which will enrol up to 40 therapists across the first two cohorts.

Rehabilitation will also offer a Specialist Certificate in Advanced Practice Physiotherapy, which equips experienced physiotherapists with the skills to expand their scope of work.



AWWA physiotherapist Lim Tong Li (left) and Dr Chin Lay Fong, assistant director (research) Allied Health at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, guiding a patient through an exercise session. Mr Lim said the new training programme would allow him to gain experience from working in hospital settings. ST PHOTO: LUTHER LAU

They will, for example, be equipped to manage and diagnose musculoskeletal injuries and could eventually order and interpret X-rays in consultation with medical doctors.

The specialist certificate will feature "interprofessional training" where medical specialists will directly mentor physiotherapists, and will take between nine months and a year to complete.

It aims to train 36 therapists over four years, with the first intake beginning in April 2026.

The programme will initially focus on musculoskeletal advanced practice physiotherapy, and will closely align with frameworks and standards developed by the Health Ministry.

Rehabilitation will also offer workshops with the aim of providing healthcare workers in primary care

and community care settings with general rehab competencies, with the aim of enrolling up to 500 across the first four years.

Courses will be developed by NHG Health, together with social service agency AWWA and SPD, a charity that helps people with disabilities.

NHG Health's senior physiotherapists will conduct training at AWWA and SPD sites, together with

community trainers.

Following the training, the senior physiotherapists will continue to

help healthcare workers at these sites to translate their training into practice.

Such a framework is needed amid a higher incidence of chronic diseases in Singapore, said Ms Doreen Yeo, co-director of the NHG Rehabilitation Health Academic Clinical Programme.

Much of the training for physiotherapists and other allied health professionals is currently provided by on-the-job training, said Ms Yeo, who is also director of allied health at Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

In contrast, the new framework is structured training provided in cooperation with an academic partner, she said.

Lien Foundation has committed \$4.08 million towards establishing Rehabilitation.

Among those who have enrolled in the residency programme is Mr Lim Tong Li, a 28-year-old physiotherapist with AWWA.

Mr Lim, who has been a physiotherapist for two years, said the programme would allow him to gain experience from working in hospital settings.

"It's a unique opportunity for me to deepen my clinical expertise so that I can contribute more meaningfully to the community," he said.

Rehabilitation was launched by Minister of State for Health Rahayu Mahzam during an event marking Allied Health and Pharmacy Day, held at the Woodlands Health Campus.

"I commend this collaboration as AHP (allied health professionals) can now work closely with rehab specialists and have the opportunity to excel in rehab care through clinical transformation, research and education," she said.

The authorities want to ensure that allied health professionals have every opportunity to grow and excel, said Ms Rahayu, who is also Minister of State for Digital Development and Information.

"That's why MOH is working on a National Allied Health Strategy building a future-ready healthcare workforce by empowering AHP with capabilities to be versatile, innovative and agile to meet the evolving needs," she said.