



Medical Spotlight

Managing Patients And Clinicians' Mental Well-Being During The COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of COVID-19 and the psychosocial repercussions of the circuit breaker on the mental health of the collective population are clear; there is an increase in the incidence of presentations of acute mental disorders related to COVID-19, across all spectrums of psychiatric conditions, including mood, anxiety and psychotic disorders. Stressors can be due to fears and concerns about contracting the illness or worries about loved ones. Circuit breaker measures inadvertently led to various levels of social isolation, and for some, the loss of measures to cope with loneliness. It is also evident that some patients are more vulnerable to COVID-19-related stress than others.

All frontline doctors, especially family medicine practitioners, can play a crucial role to screen for and identify this group of vulnerable patients. Physically, patients may present with more lethargy or develop increased heart rate and breathlessness. Emotionally, patients can feel low, depressed, anxious, and worried. Accumulation of stress often results in increased anger outbursts or fits of crying. Mentally, patients may feel anhedonic with amotivation and reduced concentration. This can often lead to poor decision-making. However, note that not everyone recognises or expresses stress in a similar manner. For instance, younger patients often experience emotional dysregulation. The child may come across to parents as having behavioural problems, such as being “naughty”, “clingy” or “aggressive”. Elderly patients are more likely to present with unexplained physical symptoms, including breathlessness, and chest and musculoskeletal pains.

For patients or healthcare workers who are experiencing stress during this period, the following list contains tips and resources that have been found to be helpful:

- As a start, it is important to recognise and accept that this period is stressful and challenging. It is helpful to be honest with our emotions and be responsive to the feelings of other family members at home. This is very relevant for families with young children or elderly members.

- To create conditions for good self-care, keep to a healthy diet and ensure adequate sleep and exercise. For those working from home, it is important to have a routine and follow a good sleep-wake rhythm.
- To limit anxiety-provoking stimuli, avoid excessive exposure to news reports and social media posts about the pandemic.
- To avoid feeling socially isolated, maintain connections, where possible, with friends and close ones.
- Seek help and do not delay doing so if there is any risk of harm to yourself or others:
 - For the general public, the Gov.sg National Care Helpline is 1800 202 6868. Other helplines are also included in this list: <https://www.gov.sg/article/tips-for-battling-stress-and-anxiety-during-covid-19>.
 - For our medical colleagues, the Singapore Psychiatric Association has a list of both volunteer and organisational psychiatrists who will see doctors in need, some at no charge. Please refer to the attachment.

Finally, I would like to conclude this short article by wishing you well. Please stay safe during this time.

Feel free to email me at tji_tjian_chee@nuhs.edu.sg if you have any queries or would like to provide feedback.

Dr Chee Tji Tjian

MBCbB, MRCS, MRCPsych, MSc (psychiatric research),
Dip (systemic therapy)

Associate Consultant

Department of Psychological Medicine
National University Hospital

Sub-Speciality: Child and Adolescent Psychiatry





New Clinical Appointments/Promotions

We are pleased to announce the appointment of two new department heads with effect from 1 April 2020:



Dr Chai Ping
Head, Department of Cardiology
National University Heart Centre, Singapore
(NUHCS)

Dr Chai joined NUH in 1999 and is currently a Senior Consultant with the Department. Dr Chai also holds an academic appointment as Assistant Professor with Department of Medicine, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore.

Being the Department's Director of Clinical Services and Chair of Program Evaluation Committee for the NUHCS Cardiology Senior Residency Program, Dr Chai is greatly involved in the clinical and education aspects of the Department. Clinically, his specialty interest lies in heart failure and non-invasive cardiovascular imaging. He also plays an active role in medical and nursing education.



Dr Chee Yin Ing Cornelia
Head, Department of Psychological Medicine
National University Hospital (NUH)

Dr Chee joined NUH in 2001 and is currently a Senior Consultant and Director for Women's Emotional Health Service with the Department. Dr Chee also holds an academic appointment as Assistant Professor with Department of Medicine, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS).

An advocate for women's mental health, Dr Chee set up the Women's Emotional Health Service in 2008 following her fellowship at the University of Toronto. She is also the Director for "Promoting Parental Health to Enhance Child Learning" (ProPEL) and Consultant to the "Assessment & Shared Care Team" (ASCAT). Dr Chee is actively involved in undergraduate and postgraduate psychiatry education, and is a recipient of the Book Prize in Psychiatry awarded by NUS.

Happenings @ NUH

Home Delivery Of Medicines During COVID-19

'Home Delivery' is a service provided by NUH that allows medicines to be delivered to patients' doorsteps. This brings greater convenience to patients by eliminating the need to travel to the hospital.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the usual home delivery charges are currently waived*.

During this period, patients may have been informed that their outpatient clinic appointment has been postponed and arrangements will be made for the pharmacy to have their top-up medicines delivered to them. Alternatively, there are two online methods for patients to arrange for home delivery.

Click [here](#) to learn more about these methods.

*Terms and conditions apply.



Revised Visitor Policy

We have updated our visitor policy and guidelines as we enter Phase One of Safe Reopening. The following policy is effective from 2 June 2020.



VISITOR POLICY

Anyone making false declarations can be prosecuted under the Infectious Diseases Act.

WARD	1	One visitor at any one time Maximum of 5 pre-designated visitors from the same or one other household.
OUTPATIENT CLINIC / CENTRE	1	Only 1 accompanying person per patient.
DAILY REGISTRATION	All must register daily, declare health status and travel history, and go through temperature screening.	
RESTRICTIONS	The following will be denied entry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those who are unwell * Those on Quarantine Order, Stay Home Notice or Leave of Absence Children 12 years and below (except patients) Those without a mask. * Fever, cough, shortness of breath, blocked or runny nose, sore throat or loss of smell.	

All patients, accompanying persons and designated caregivers must bring their **own masks** and ensure the masks are worn at all times.

Click [here](#) for more information on the **visitor policies for inpatient wards and outpatient clinics / centres**.

NUH in the News

Happy To Beat Isolation; Social Distancing Is Not Social Isolation

The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reproduced with permission

The Healthy Ageing Promotion Programme For You (HAPPY) has gone online to help seniors stay active during the circuit breaker period. A/Prof Reshma Merchant, Head of the Division of Geriatric Medicine at NUH, highlighted that social isolation is a rising public health concern globally, but seniors can improve their mobility and walking speed by engaging in simple exercises. A/Prof Reshma emphasised that social distancing is not social isolation, and seniors can continue to be active and socially engaged through a programme such as HAPPY.

Click [here](#) to read the full article.



SINGAPORE PSYCHIATRIC
ASSOCIATION

20 May 2020

Dear colleagues,

Mental health support for doctors in Singapore.

The COVID-19 pandemic will impact the mental health of some doctors. The Singapore Psychiatric Association in collaboration with the Singapore Medical Association are collaborating to improve the mental health of doctors. The list below are psychiatrists/counsellors who can see doctors either for informal support or medical consultation. Most clinics are offering their services pro-bono. Due to organizational policies, fees apply at some clinics. We hope doctors who need mental health support will find these services useful.

Pro-bono services

No	Clinic/ Service	Contact	Remarks
1	Better Life Psychological Medicine Clinic (Dr Lee Ee Lian)	6250 8077	
2	Better Life Psychological Medicine Clinic (Dr Kamini Rajaratnam)	6250 8077	Phone/ Tele Visits available
3	Psychiatric Care Clinic (Dr Tay Liam Kai) #05-48 Mount Elizabeth Novena.	67335565 taylkclinic@gmail.com	Mention "COVID doctors"
4	Raffles Counselling Centre (Dr Chua Siew Eng) 585 North Bridge Road, Level 8 Raffles Specialists Centre	63112330 counsellingcentre@ rafflesmedical.com	Consultations probono. Medications and investigations chargeable.
5	Mind Care Clinic, Farrer Park Medical Centre (Prof Kua Ee Heok)	pcmkeh@nus.edu.sg	
6	Dr Soh Keng Chuan	soh.keng.chuan@ktp.com.sg	Online consultation as Dr Soh is overseas.
7	SAF Psychological Care Centre (Kent Ridge or IMH campus) - Dr Goh Kye Hock, Robin - Dr Loh Seng Wei, Adrian - Dr Soh Teck Hwee - Dr Syed Harun Alhabsyi - Dr Teoh Chi-Chan, Timothy - Dr Wong Sheau Hwa	pcc_ctu@defence.gov.sg Email header in this format: "Self-Referral to <<Name of Psychiatrist>>" and leave a contact number. If no preference, please state <<Any Psychiatrist>>. No need to provide full name, practice details or reason for referral.	Service for any NSmen who are doctors as there is a need to use SAF's EMR.

8	Clarity Singapore	67577990 ask@clarity-singapore.org	Mention you are a healthcare worker
---	-------------------	---------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Registration with clinic needed and fees apply

	Psychiatrist	Contact	Remarks
1	Dr Mok Yee Ming	63892000	IMH
2	Dr Guo Song	63892000	IMH
3	Dr Marcus Tan Zhongqiang	63892000	IMH

Best regards,



Dr Christopher Cheok
President, Singapore Psychiatric Association