In October, NUH clinched four awards at the 7th National Healthcare Quality Improvement Poster Competition held in conjunction with the MOH Healthcare Quality Improvement Conference 2010.

The poster entitled “The Big Squeeze: Providing Safer and Timelier Access to Emergency, Ambulatory and Inpatient Care in NUH” emerged top among the 152 abstracts submitted by various public and private healthcare institutions. Implemented in phases starting from November 2009, the hospital-wide “Big Squeeze” initiative was designed to offer our patients at the A&E specialised care by doctors of specific disciplines within two hours of decision to admit. The project has also streamlined the specialist outpatient appointment booking process and increased the number of early discharges before noon, resulting in an average shorter wait time for beds.

This award highlights our continuous efforts in putting patients’ interest paramount and at the heart of what we do everyday. It recognises NUH’s teamwork and courage in making hospital-wide changes for the benefit of our patients. Although our journey of improvement is still ongoing, we celebrate this award in recognition of the considerable progress achieved in providing timelier and better care for our patients.

Associate Professor Quek Swee Chye, Deputy Chairman Medical Board, NUH

Three other projects by NUH were presented with Merit Awards, including a dynamic dashboard system that improves patient safety and care coordination by relaying real time Operating Theatre (OT) information to the entire surgical team comprising surgeons, nurses and anaesthetists and two other initiatives that reduce waiting time for medication.

NUH Improvement Projects Win National Awards
Inpatient Medication Management System wins National Infocomm Awards 2010

The Closed-Loop Inpatient Medication Management (CLMM) system jointly implemented by NUH and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) in collaboration with the Integrated Health Information Systems (IHiS) was the winner of the “Most Innovative Use of Infocomm Technology Public Sector” category at the National Infocomm Awards 2010.

Organised by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation (SiTF), the Awards is the IT industry’s highest accolade for innovations in infocomm.

Dr James Yip, Chief Medical Information Officer, National University Health System (NUHS) and Senior Consultant, National University Heart Centre, Singapore received the Award on behalf of NUH, TTSH and IHiS from RADM (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, then Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts at the presentation ceremony held in early October.

The CLMM was first implemented by NUH in February 2009. By October the same year, it was adopted for use in all the wards in the hospital. It is designed to reduce errors in the prescription, dispensing and administering of medication.

In the system, doctors prescribe medication on mobile computers. The information is then transmitted electronically to the medication storage unit housed in the ward and nurses’ personal digital assistants (PDA). Pharmacists will review the medication order before preparing it. Guiding lights in the medication storage unit ensures accurate picking of medication by nurses. Patients’ wrist tags and bar-coded medication labels are scanned by nurses using PDA to ensure the correct medication is served to the correct patient.

Commenting on the system, Dr Yip said: “The challenge in the past was that all the orders were written on just one sheet of paper. And this one sheet of paper had to be shared between the doctors, nurses and pharmacists.”

“With CLMM, we have enhanced our medication safety process by ensuring that patients are given the right drug, in the right dose, at the right time.”

Besides enhancing medication safety, CLMM has helped to improve efficiency and allowed nurses to focus on patient-centric activities. Based on a study conducted by NUH, time spent on the medication serving session has been cut by an average of 15 minutes, or a total of 45 minutes per ward per day. Medication errors have also dropped by 27%.

“We are encouraged by the good results and hope that in two to three years’ time, the system can be translated into an outpatient setting where medication can be bought out of vending machines,” said Dr Yip.

NUH Achieves JCI Re-Accreditation!

In August 2010, NUH was re-accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) for the second time in recognition of its ongoing commitment to provide quality and safe patient care that meets globally accepted standards. In 2004, it was the first Singapore hospital to receive the JCI accreditation, an international stamp for excellent practices in patient care and safety.

Dr James Yip (2nd from left) and Dr Pauline Yong, TTSH (3rd from left) with RADM (NS) Lui Tuck Yew (2nd from right) at the National Infocomms Awards 2010 Presentation Ceremony.

You were the first hospital to be accredited and you have defined the benchmark. I think you should feel very satisfied with the level of care that you provide and the thousands of lives that you have touched, not just from Singapore but also from neighbouring countries.

Dr Anupam Sibal, Physician Surveyor

“I saw excellent, excellent practices throughout your organisation. Very impressive. My expectations have been more than exceeded.”

Mrs Roberta Heath, Nurse Surveyor
Ask The Expert

I notice my three-year old daughter gets frequent nose-bleeds. What are the usual causes of nose-bleeds? Is there anything to be concerned about?

Nosebleeds are very common in childhood and many children will outgrow them eventually.

Most children bleed from the Little's area – an area with blood vessels near the surface on either side of the nasal septum which can be seen when you look into the nostrils. Rubbing and digging the nose when it is blocked or itchy – a common habit among children – can injure the Little’s area and cause nosebleeds.

If your daughter has very frequent nose bleeds or prolonged nose bleeds (lasting more than 20 minutes), she may need further tests to ensure that there are no other problems. If the bleeding is only from the Little’s area but it is frequent and prolonged, blood tests will also need to be done to check whether she has any bleeding disorder. Signs of a bleeding disorder would include prolonged bleeding after minor cuts, after dental procedure, or she may bruise easily. You may also want to ask if any of your family members have a tendency to bleed because sometimes bleeding disorder can run in the family. If the bleeding is not from the Little’s area, she may need to see a ENT (Ear/Nose/Throat) doctor to determine the source of bleeding.

Dr Koh Pei Lin
Consultant, Department of Paediatrics, University Children’s Medical Institute

I am a 39 year old male and I’m going through a particularly stressful period of my life since a year ago. And to add insult to my injury, I’ve also started grinding my teeth in my sleep. I wake up in the mornings feeling very sore at my jaw area and for some reason, I also feel that my jaw line seems to be getting more masculine. Is teeth grinding harmful to teeth and is there anything I can do about the soreness?

Grinding or clenching of the teeth during sleep is known as sleep or nocturnal bruxism. Some people have episodes that occur infrequently while others have nightly episodes that can lead to abnormal and excessive wear of the teeth and jaw muscle discomfort.

If the tooth damage is not advanced, your dentist can make a nightguard that fits over the teeth to prevent further wear. The nightguard will also help with the jaw soreness. Untreated long term bruxism can cause significant tooth wear which may require more extensive dental work, for example, damaged teeth may need to be crowned. In some cases bruxism can also lead to discomfort in the jaw (temporomandibular) joint.

Long term, teeth grinding is harmful to your teeth and jaw and you should visit your dentist to discuss your options.

Assistant Professor Clarisse Ng
Department of Restorative Dentistry

Why is too much salt bad for the kidneys? When the kidneys detect an increase in salt, how do they normally respond?

Some amount of salt is important for the body to function properly. Common table salt (sodium chloride) when taken in amounts greater than 6g a day for long periods causes an increase in blood volume. This increases blood pressure. The kidney detects this rise in blood pressure and attempts to excrete this excess salt. Over time, high blood pressure can lead to organ damage such as heart and kidney failure, and strokes. When kidney damage happens, excess salt is no longer easily excreted.

Dr Jimmy Teo,
Consultant, Division of Nephrology, University Medicine Cluster

I am 30 weeks pregnant and am finding trouble falling asleep at night or even napping in the afternoon. What could be the cause of the sleeplessness and what should I do?

Pregnancy affects sleep through hormonal changes, physiologic changes, physical factors, and behavioural changes. Women in the first trimester feel sleepy due to higher levels of progesterone and night time frequency of urination which interrupts sleep. Many women also experience nausea and vomiting during this period. Three quarters of women report sleep disturbances in the final trimester due largely to the combination of hormone changes and the physical discomfort.

Try simple measures like avoiding or limiting coffee. Avoid drinking anything just before going to bed. Avoid big meals. Find ways to relax. Stick to your sleep schedule. Some doctors will prescribe antihistaminic medication to help patient sleep better. If the symptom persists, you may wish to consult a psychiatrist to rule out any underlying psychiatric condition.

Dr Anita Kale
Associate Consultant, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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