



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

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**SPEECH BY AMY KHOR, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH AT THE
COMMUNITY CARE MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AWARDS CEREMONY
ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2017, 10 AM**

Dr Jason Cheah,
CEO, Agency for Integrated Care,

Healthcare leaders and colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

1 It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning for the Community Care Manpower Development Awards (CCMDA) Ceremony.

2 I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all our award recipients here today, who have made a meaningful difference to those under their care.

We also recognise the efforts of their employers, who have helped to make the achievements of our community care staff possible.

3 With an ageing population, Singapore needs to build a strong community care system so that we can provide good care and support to our growing population of seniors. In the past few years, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has invested consistently in enhancing the capacity, affordability and quality of aged care services, and worked hand in hand with primary care and aged care providers, to build a robust and comprehensive community care system.



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4 A strong community care system must be anchored by a committed and capable workforce. MOH will continue to invest in developing our community care workforce in three ways -- by building future skills, growing the Singaporean core, and improving productivity.

Building future skills

5 Building future skills at all levels of the community care workforce is critical to addressing the changing needs of an ageing population. From clinical areas like geriatric nursing and mental health to non-clinical areas like IT and community engagement, the demand for new skills will rise. The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) has been providing support through various scholarships and awards, such as the Balaji Sadasivan Study Award and the Intermediate and Long-Term Care-Upgrading Programme (ILTC-UP).

6 To better meet growing and changing training needs, AIC has consolidated and expanded the scope of the various scholarships and awards into the new Community Care Manpower Development Awards (CCMDA) from April 2017. **I am pleased to announce that MOH will invest close to \$12 million over the next four years in workforce development through the CCMDA.** For new entrants, the CCMDA covers a wider range of healthcare disciplines including social work, speech therapy and healthcare and therapy support. For current staff, in addition to degree and post-graduate programmes, the award will now also cover entry-level qualifications, including courses related to corporate functions. The award has also been extended to staff from all community care organisations, including private community care service providers.

7 One of our CCMDA recipients this year is Ms Aw Hui Zhen. Hui Zhen joined the sector after graduating from Nanyang Polytechnic. Under the Balaji Sadasivan Study Award, she received funding for her diploma in physiotherapy. With support from the ILTC-UP, she subsequently pursued a physiotherapy degree with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), where she went on a 6-week clinical attachment in Ireland. With her knowledge, skills and exposure to a different healthcare system, Hui Zhen was able to help set up a new home therapy service with her previous employer. Wanting to do more for cancer patients, Hui Zhen recently joined the Singapore Cancer Society and is now pursuing an Advanced Certificate in Lymphedema Management. This is a relatively new



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area of cancer rehabilitation, and she hopes to establish this service for clients in her organisation in the future.

8 Our community care staff also have an important role to play in building a more integrated healthcare sector to support person-centred care and ageing-in-place. Dr Grace Chiang, also a CCMDA recipient this year, hopes to strengthen links between the different care settings through her research on ageing and frailty. During her rotation with St Luke's Hospital in 2013, she found her passion in working with seniors and wanted to do more beyond providing clinical care as a doctor. She is currently pursuing a Master of Public Health at John Hopkins University, and hopes to develop new care models to reach out to vulnerable seniors in the community.

9 I am pleased to note that there are also more programmes to support existing community care staff to deepen their skills and develop their careers further in the community. For example, a new Work-Learn Technical Diploma in Rehabilitation Care will be offered by the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) from April 2018, where trainees will be able to work and study at the same time. With a large part of the curriculum dedicated to on-the-job training, trainees can look forward to acquiring new skills and knowledge in rehabilitative care delivery.

Growing the Singaporean core

10 To grow the Singaporean core in the community care sector, MOH has been working with AIC to intensify efforts to attract more job seekers.

11 Since 2015, AIC has organised recruitment fairs in partnership with Workforce Singapore (WSG) and the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) to showcase community care jobs. An inaugural online career fair was organised recently with STJobs. Outreach efforts have seen positive results with participating employers receiving more than 600 applications at its recent job fair at Cheng San Community Club. Our recruitment efforts have also resulted in more than 450 locals successfully finding employment in the sector over the past year.



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12 We have put in place customised programmes to support new entrants into the community care sector. Through these programmes, they are given the relevant training and mentorship to help them scale the learning curve and succeed in their careers.

13 One community care staff who has benefited from such a programme is Mr Andrew Chua, who is currently a therapy aide at Lee Ah Mooi Old Age Home. Andrew was working as a front desk executive in a hotel when he chanced upon a community care job fair. Motivated by the desire to contribute more directly to the community, he applied for a job with the nursing home at the fair. He underwent the Community Care Traineeship Programme (CCTP) for new support care staff, where he received on-the-job training to better understand his work and learn from experienced mentors. Andrew is happy to have found his place in the community care sector, where being able to interact with his residents every day gives him the motivation to keep going.

14 Besides CCTP, the Senior Management Associate Scheme (SMAS) is available to professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) keen on making a mid-career switch into community care to take on managerial roles in areas such as operations, human resource, administration, facilities management and information technology. We have just welcomed the second batch of 27 associates into the scheme this June. With diverse experience and skills in areas ranging from IT, finance to mass media, I am confident that the associates will be able to contribute to the sector's development.

Improving productivity

15 Even as we grow the community care workforce, we will need to press on with improving productivity given tighter manpower constraints amidst the rising demand for healthcare services. We have been working with providers to enhance work processes, leverage technology and adopt shared services. These efforts can also improve the work environment, make healthcare jobs more attractive and ultimately contribute to better care for our seniors. As at March this year, more than 60 community care providers had tapped on the Healthcare Productivity Fund and undertaken over 100 productivity improvement projects. I encourage providers to continue tapping on the HPF to improve productivity.



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Conclusion

16 It is indeed an exciting time to be in the community care sector as we work together to transform care. With good training programmes for new entrants, and greater opportunities for existing staff to pursue further studies and develop their careers, seniors will benefit from better standards of care. I hope to see more individuals choosing to join community care, and more employers joining us in our efforts to grow and develop the sector.

17 Congratulations once again to all award recipients. I wish all of you a pleasant day ahead. Thank you.



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