

# Being a pillar of support

At the National University Polyclinics, senior medical social worker Audrey Hii counsels patients and their families and directs them to appropriate community care resources



Offering practical advice and emotional support to a patient is part of Ms Hii's job as a senior medical social worker. PHOTO: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY POLYCLINICS

BY MICHELLE CHIN

Giving practical advice and offering emotional support to patients and their family members is part and parcel of Ms Audrey Hii's job as a senior medical social worker.

This aspect of her work helps patients who may have emotional issues or face challenges coping with lifestyle adjustments due to their medical conditions, such as diabetes and dementia, and also supports their family members who may suffer from caregiver stress as a result.

In addition, the 38-year-old collaborates with government and social service agencies, as well as navigates through complex policies and resources, to support patients to receive help for their financial, employment and accommodation needs.

For instance, she links patients up with the Financial Counselling Services team to request financial assistance to pay for polyclinic medical bills, and does home visits to reach out to bed-bound patients who are unable to visit the polyclinics.

### Understanding patients' needs

Together with other healthcare providers such as doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, Ms Hii works in the primary care setting to care for patients. Primary care professionals, who are often the patients' initial point of contact in the healthcare system, provide them with holistic and personalised care.

She divides her time between Jurong Polyclinic and Queenstown Polyclinic which are part of a network of clinics known as the National University Polyclinics (NUP).

Before joining the healthcare sector, Ms Hii, who has a bachelor's degree in counselling psychology with honours from Universiti Malaysia Sabah, worked as a social worker at a family service centre.

For about six years, she handled issues related to marriages, parenting, family conflicts and mental health during her work there. While working at the family service centre, Ms Hii also pursued a Graduate Diploma in Social Work from Singapore University of Social Sciences (formerly known as UniSIM).

**"I enjoy a rewarding career and it takes a specific mentality to be able to understand disease journeys and how they affect the body, and then to connect them to patients' day-to-day challenges."**

**MS AUDREY HII**, senior medical social worker, National University Polyclinics

Later on, when she was working at NUP, Ms Hii pursued a Graduate Diploma in Counselling Practice from Counselling and Care Centre.

The difference between her past and current job is that she now attends to patients who also suffer from medical issues, on top of emotional or mental ones.

She says: "Having an illness contributes additional stress to a family that is already in crisis; it impacts family relationships emotionally, physically and financially."

"I enjoy a rewarding career and it takes a specific mentality to be able to understand disease journeys and how they affect the body, and then to connect them to patients' day-to-day challenges."

Difficulties arise when community resources are limited, and patients have to undergo means-testing to ascertain if they qualify to receive help.

In such cases, the wait for an answer can be frustrating for the patients and their families. But she does not give up hope to look for alternative solutions.

This is where Ms Hii recognises that building relationships and rapport with others is as important as understanding patients' challenges.

After all, medical social workers need to be open to networking with others in the community to find the best help possible for patients and their families.

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- Senior / Nurse Clinician
- Assistant Nurse Clinician
- Senior / Staff Nurse
- Senior / Enrolled Nurse

### Allied Health & Pharmacy

- Audiologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Podiatrist
- Pharmacy Technician

### Medical

- Senior Consultant / Consultant
- Senior Resident Physician / Resident Physician
- Hospital Clinician

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- Senior / Executive, Programmes & Analytics (Contract)
- Assistant Manager (Analytics)
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- Patient Service Associate
- Senior / Healthcare Assistant (Singaporeans only)



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Bukit Panjang Polyclinic, which is managed by the National University Polyclinics, is on a recruitment drive before it opens later this year. Graduates with social work qualifications accredited by the Singapore Association of Social Workers are welcome to apply. Visit [www.nup.com.sg](http://www.nup.com.sg) for more information.



Mdm Cynthia Lim finds her work most satisfying when she receives immediate recognition and positive feedback from customers after helping them to find solutions. PHOTO: TED CHEN

# A problem-solver at heart

Moving from the banking to healthcare industry also enables 1FSS' senior finance executive Cynthia Lim to find satisfaction in resolving customers' issues

BY JUNE MAK

Careers in healthcare often bring to mind roles such as doctors, specialists, nurses and therapists. But within the same sector is another group of key staff who work behind the scenes to attend to a non-health concern of patients or their families — healthcare bills.

While frontline healthcare staff deal with work that can involve life and death issues, backend warriors help to lend crucial support in other areas. For instance, Madam Cynthia Lim Poh Choo, 67, is a senior finance executive at the 1 Finance Shared Services (1FSS), Accounts Receivables, where she oversees the handling of billing enquiries. 1FSS is a subsidiary of MOH Holdings and was set up in 2019 as the financial shared services centre for all public healthcare institutions in Singapore.

Prior to this, she spent 22 years in the banking industry where her last role was in credit information. She decided to enter the healthcare industry because she wanted to do something meaningful for the rest of her career. So when she was 48 years old in 2001, she made the move to join National University Hospital's finance department.

As she used to be involved in dealing with customers in her previous job, she was able to relate to her new role in a different sector. Till today, she says that her passion for customer service keeps her motivated to help patients overcome challenging issues.

## Going the extra mile

A typical work day for Mdm Lim starts with an internal team meeting to share learning points from the cases they manage. Operational duties include responding to customers' calls and emails on billing enquiries, and trying to resolve the issues they face.

"I'm also managing several innovation projects for the company that will help better streamline our processes," she adds.

Sometimes, her work involves settling anxious customers. Once, she had an agitated customer who could not understand his hospital bill and the payment methods he could use. She kicked into her problem-solving mode and sat down with him to go through his bill and guide him on how he could settle his payment. She also worked with several departments in the hospital to help him with his claims. The customer was so pleased with her service that he e-mailed a compliment to commend her after that.

With her great work attitude over the years, Mdm Lim has won several Service Champion awards, and an Achievement Award for Service during the SARS epidemic in 2003.

## Strengthening her capabilities

Mdm Lim also has a part in managing projects that help to streamline her department's operation process. For example, she is working on a self-help system that will enable patients to key in their requests for bills, forms and receipts by reviewing the process flow and flagging areas that are unclear.

She is appreciative of 1FSS' efforts to nurture and upskill its staff. Since she joined the organisation, she has taken up various courses to equip herself with skills to become more effective at handling complaints and improve as a team player and supervisor.

Mdm Lim believes that having a passion for healthcare and being willing to serve others are important when considering a role in healthcare. Upholding integrity at work is crucial too, she says. In addition, one must be willing to keep learning to be able to add value to the organisation.





## Family health begins with us

The **National University Polyclinics (NUP)** provides primary care treatment for acute illnesses, management of chronic diseases, women and child health services and dental care. As part of the National University Health System (NUHS), we collaborate with the hospitals and specialty centres within NUHS to redefine healthcare.

NUP comprises a network of polyclinics — Bukit Batok, Choa Chu Kang, Clementi, Jurong, Pioneer, Queenstown, and soon to come, Bukit Panjang (2020\*), Tengah (2025\*) and Yew Tee (2026\*). Partnering general practitioners, grassroots, the community and social care partners, we work together to ensure the well-being of the community we serve.

Come join us and work together with a group of like-minded people who share a common passion in serving our community and ensuring exceptional patient care delivery, disease prevention and healthy living. Be part of a healthcare family who works (and plays hard) together to heal, teach and focus on improving the health of the community we live in!

\*Estimated date

### MEDICAL

#### Family Physician

You will be part of the Clinical Team in providing medical services to the patients. You will be involved in patient management, team-based care, education, research and audit activities for the benefit of our patients and the clinic. Candidates with leadership qualities will be considered for leadership roles in the organisation.

### NURSING

#### Nurse Manager

You will lead a team of polyclinic nurses in providing quality care to patients and be responsible for the efficient delivery of services and patient care through regular review of processes and training and development of nurses.

#### Senior / Staff Nurse

You will participate in the multi-disciplinary approach to patient care and be responsible for developing and providing independent nurse-led services in chronic disease management, health promotion and preventive care.

### ALLIED HEALTH

#### Senior / Medical Social Worker

You will provide optimum psychosocial and emotional care to the patients so that they can cope better with their medical and living conditions by working closely with multi-disciplinary professionals as you pursue holistic care for patients.

#### Senior / Podiatrist

You will assess, diagnose, and implement treatments for a range of problems related to the foot and lower limbs in the primary care setting, as well as educate and conduct talks to patients and caregivers on preventive foot care.

### DENTAL

#### Dental Assistant

You will assist the Dental Officer in operative dentistry, endodontic and prosthodontic procedures, and educate patients on dental and post-operative care. You will comply with work safety regulations and ensure cleanliness and sterility of dental instruments and equipment. You are also required to comply with Infection Control Practices and maintain Infection Control Standards.

### ANCILLARY

#### Assistant / Care Coordinator

You will assist the care management team in providing basic screening and measurements for patients with chronic illnesses, and coordinate care activities for them with the care team.

#### Patient Service Associate

You will facilitate patients' journey through the various service points in polyclinics by assisting in patients' registration, managing patients' general enquiries, screening patients' general condition and providing administrative support as and when required. You will also attend to calls, and ensure that customers' enquiries and appointment requests are managed in a prompt and professional manner.

### ADMINISTRATION

#### Assistant Director, Corporate & Operations Planning

NUP is on a transformative journey to further develop primary care in the west. This is a leadership opportunity where you will lead and manage the department to support NUP's leadership in Strategic Planning, Enterprise Risk Management and Data Governance (including PDPA).

### Manager, Corporate & Operations Planning

You will be NUP's key driver for corporate strategy and planning as we embark on a transformative journey to establish our thought leadership in Primary Care development. You will be closely involved in analysis of existing strategies, processes as well as new initiatives, to drive positive outcomes for NUP.

### Manager / Assistant Manager, Health Information

You will play an active role in NUP's transformative journey in the area of data and analytics. You will use analytics to enable insights and performance tracking, as well as aid in shaping primary healthcare, decision-making and strategic planning for NUP.

### Assistant Manager / Senior Executive, HQ Clinic Operations

You will support day-to-day operations of individual clinic from HQ level, liaise with clinics to operationalise and support the implementation of new initiatives/projects/workflows. You will also support the adherence of processes and practices in clinic operations, support the review of systems and processes, and assist the clinics in preparation for job re-design of operations staff in tandem with service transformation efforts.

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Candidates may also send your resume to [nup\\_careers@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:nup_careers@nuhs.edu.sg)

Please apply by **7 March 2020**.

Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

