

**SPEECH BY MR GAN KIM YONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AT THE
FUTUREHEALTH 2017 CONFERENCE, AT THE LEE KONG CHIAN SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE ON WEDNESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2017, 10.40AM**

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues and friends,

INTRODUCTION

1. It is my pleasure to join you at FutureHealth 2017, Innovations Transforming Healthcare.
2. The care needs of Singaporeans have grown rapidly, due to our ageing population, higher chronic disease incidence and rising public expectations. On the other hand, medical knowledge and technologies are also advancing, bringing about new possibilities in how we prevent, diagnose and treat diseases.
3. To help Singaporeans enjoy good health and quality healthcare amidst these changes, we have embarked on three key shifts: *Beyond Healthcare to Health*; to help and support Singaporeans live healthier lives; *Beyond Hospital to Community*; so Singaporeans can receive care in the community and nearer to home; and *Beyond Quality to Value*; to ensure that our healthcare system is effective in providing Singaporeans with good care, at affordable costs and in a sustainable way.
4. But we cannot make these changes alone. Everyone has a part to play. Each individual has a responsibility to take care of our own health, and to care for the wellbeing of our families. Healthcare providers are also partners in our healthcare journey – in particular our healthcare workers, who work hard and sacrifice much to take care of our health. But beyond our frontline staff, there are many others who keep our systems running smoothly – our administrative and operations staff, including our

cooks, storekeepers, technicians, porters, cleaners and many more. Let me thank them for their dedication and contributions to our healthcare system.

5. There is yet another group of partners – our researchers and entrepreneurs in academia, startups and industry who come up with new technology innovations, smart systems or medical devices which facilitate our daily work, making us more productive and deliver better care to patients.

6. We need to bring all these parties together – patients, providers and researchers and innovators – so that we can successfully make the three shifts which I mentioned earlier and transform healthcare for the future. This conference is timely as it brings together all the important stakeholders in the pursuit of this important goal.

LAUNCHING THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION MAP (ITM)

7. But beyond the conference, we need a plan to map out and coordinate this broader healthcare ecosystem development. Towards this end, MOH has been working with the manpower and economic agencies, to embark on the Industry Transformation Map (ITM) process under the auspices of the Future Economy Council (FEC). The ITM is a collaborative effort of our healthcare family, union partners, economic agencies, Skills Future SG and Workforce Singapore through the Essential Domestic Services Sub-Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the co-chairs Senior Minister of State Mr Chee Hong Tat and Ms Mary Liew, and members of the committee for their support and contribution to the Healthcare ITM – truly a tripartite effort. Today, I am happy to share with you the key thrusts of the Healthcare ITM that sets out three key focus areas:

8. **First, building a strong local core through jobs and skills development.**

Today, the healthcare workforce includes doctors, nurses, healthcare professionals as well as support staff, and spans across multiple sectors, from primary care, to nursing home and senior care providers, to our acute hospitals and specialty centres in both the public and private sectors. Given the growth in healthcare needs, we can expect that our demand for healthcare manpower will continue to grow.

9. I welcome more Singaporeans of all ages to join our growing healthcare sector. In particular, we hope to see more people taking up nursing as a career. We have already put in place numerous schemes to promote the nursing profession. As care needs shift to the community, we have launched a community nursing scholarship in July this year to develop leaders in community nursing. We will also open up more training pathways to facilitate mid-career PMETs to join nursing and make it easier for community nurses to upskill.

10. Across the system, as our care needs change, upgrading the skills of our healthcare manpower becomes even more critical. We will be developing skills frameworks for nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacy technicians and support care staff by the end of 2018. So, whether young or old, fresh school leavers, midcareer Singaporeans, or non-practising healthcare professionals, we will help you with training and development to take on meaningful and fulfilling careers in this sector.

11. The second pillar of the ITM is **enhancing productivity to enable healthcare workers to work smarter**. As the sector continues to grow, with a smaller local workforce, it is not sustainable to simply add more and more staff. In the hospitals, we want to help our nurses reduce time spent on areas such as inventory management, documentation, food services and patient transport so that more of their time can be spent on patient care.

12. People play a crucial role in productivity improvements. Later today, we will be recognising the efforts of 7 winning teams of healthcare professionals as they receive the National Healthcare Innovation and Productivity (HIP) Medals. They serve as an inspiration to all of us that even as we address the patient needs of today, we are also creating the new healthcare of tomorrow.

13. The final pillar **is catalysing innovation by working with our service providers, industry partners, educational and research institutions, and Singaporeans to develop tomorrow's solutions.**

14. Here, I am glad to see that A*STAR, NHG, SPRING Singapore and Biotech Connection, have come together to organise the recent Open Innovation Challenge in Healthcare (or OICH) which aims to foster clinician-industry collaborations in innovation, and shorten time-to-market of healthcare solutions. I understand the winners will be sharing their learnings and experience this afternoon at the conference.

15. Together, these three pillars will help transform our healthcare sector, to better ensure we achieve our Beyond Healthcare 2020 vision.

ENHANCING CONTINUITY OF CARE AND RAISING PATIENT SAFETY THROUGH DATA CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEHR

16. When we work on transforming healthcare to provide better care to Singaporeans, one key enabler is the use of IT through digitisation and closer connections between healthcare providers. In 2011, we introduced the National Electronic Health Record System (or NEHR) to bring together clinical summary records from different care providers, enabling information to be shared across providers for enhanced patient safety and facilitate care integration.

17. Today, this is even more important with an increasing number of patients suffering from multiple medical conditions requiring team-based care. Patients will benefit from the NEHR when their doctors and care teams are able to access their key medical history when necessary and, work across settings to provide them with coordinated, holistic and safer care. This is particularly important during emergencies.

18. There was a case where an unconscious man was brought in by ambulance to the Tan Tock Seng Emergency Department. A CT scan revealed bleeding inside his brain. The patient was unable to communicate and no family contact information was available. The attending doctor, Dr. Charmaine Manauis, pulled up his medical records in the NEHR. She found that he was recently prescribed an anticoagulant for his heart condition. This drug has the effect of reducing the ability of a person's blood to clot. With this information, Dr. Charmaine was able to prescribe the appropriate treatment, that helped the patient recover quickly.

19. This is just one of many examples. The NEHR has the potential to save lives, and enables significantly better integrated care across the various healthcare institutions. Today, over 1,100 healthcare providers across public and private care settings have access to the NEHR with stringent access controls. Last month alone, over 1 million patient searches were made on the NEHR. However, while access has been growing significantly over the years, more can be done, especially in encouraging private healthcare providers, GPs, private hospitals and specialists to contribute data to the NEHR.

20. Patients can only realise the full benefits of the NEHR if the data is comprehensive. And for NEHR data to be comprehensive, every provider and healthcare professional needs to contribute relevant data to it.

21. MOH therefore intends to take the next major step in our NEHR journey, to require **mandatory data contribution by all licensees, such as healthcare providers and laboratories, so as to improve data comprehensiveness for better patient care**. We plan to introduce legislation to do so next year.

22. We have consulted many in the healthcare sector on this. Healthcare professionals and patients alike are supportive as it enables care continuity and patient safety. However, we recognise that some care providers may face challenges and they may have concerns. MOH will help them.

23. MOH will be **increasing support for contributions to the NEHR**. We will be providing clinical and technical expertise, as well as financial support, to help healthcare providers make the transition.

24. First, we will organise workshops and focus groups among different stakeholders over the next few months, to better understand their concerns and how we can help them contribute to the NEHR. We will also run a series of technical workshops for IT vendors of clinic management or medical record software to meet the data requirements.

25. Second, we will make online resources available for providers and vendors to get advice on how to contribute data to the NEHR, where to seek assistance and how to access the support provided.

26. Third, we will provide an Early Contribution Incentive to encourage early adoption of NEHR before the legislative requirement takes effect. This will help healthcare providers and labs defray part of the costs associated with enhancing their IT systems to be NEHR-ready. As this is an incentive to encourage early adoption, only early birds that start contributing medical data to the NEHR will receive the funding. We have set aside a budget of S\$20 million for this. Our healthtech agency, the Integrated Health Information Systems (or IHiS), will work with healthcare providers and labs to provide this support from today.

27. Healthcare providers and professionals have also given other feedback such as system security and safeguards. We will certainly work with healthcare providers, professionals and other stakeholders in the coming months to see where we can further strengthen and refine.

CONCLUSION

28. Ladies and Gentlemen, the transformation of our healthcare ecosystem and workforce is a journey. It is a journey that we need to take together – as leaders, educators, researchers, industry partners, healthcare workers, patients, caregivers and as individuals.

29. Only if we share the same vision of future health, can we lay a strong foundation for better skills and better work for our healthcare professionals, and deliver better care for Singaporeans.

30. I congratulate the organising committee for putting together a successful and thought-provoking programme and I wish all of you a fruitful 3 days of co-learning from one another. Thank you.