



# PSS E-BULLETIN

To maximise the contribution of pharmacists to the healthcare of Singaporeans



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# MEET OUR 119<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL MEMBERS



**President**  
Ms Lim Hong Yee

Dear fellow PSS members,

As we embark on the journey with the 119<sup>th</sup> Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore, I am both humbled and energized to serve alongside dedicated colleagues who share our vision for advancing pharmacy practice in Singapore.

Our profession stands at an exciting crossroads amidst a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. Building upon the strong foundation laid by our predecessors, we are poised to strengthen PSS's role as the unifying platform that brings together pharmacists across all sectors - from hospitals and community practice to academia, industry, and regulatory bodies.

Looking ahead, we will focus on few key strategic thrusts. Firstly, we are committed to capabilities building including mentoring, career and leadership development. Establishing a training academy to develop new curriculum relevant to emerging healthcare needs will be part of this year's workplans. Secondly, we will reinvigorate PSS's identity and value proposition to members through innovative initiatives such as special interest vertical tracks in areas like Innovation (focus on Artificial Intelligence this year) and clinical practice advancement (focus on policies and practice recommendations), creating meaningful opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas and expertise across different practice settings.

We recognize the challenges ahead especially so with resource constraints leading to the need for workforce transformation. However, I am confident that by embracing technology, fostering innovation, and most importantly, standing united as one profession with one voice, we can create positive change for our patients and healthcare system.

Your active participation and support will be crucial in this journey. Together, let us work towards advancing pharmacy practice and strengthening our professional community.

Yours sincerely,  
Ms Lim Hong Yee  
President, 119<sup>th</sup> PSS Council

# MEET OUR 119<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL MEMBERS


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Public Education and Advocacy

*A photo of the 119<sup>th</sup> Council Members and their respective roles.*

# INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH PHARMACY'S SUSTAINABILITY EFFORT



*A group photo of team members involved in the installation of BYOB rack. Members are from the pharmacy department, Allied Health Operations, and Green Committee.*

In general, hospitals and other healthcare institutions are resource-intensive organisations. They consume massive energy and generate a large amount of waste. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is not an exception. In 2022, the total waste generated by IMH was 1,896.87 tonnes. Of this, only 33.62 tonnes were recycled, and 1,863.25 tonnes were disposed of. To address this critical issue, IMH is committed to aligning with the broader national and global efforts to address climate change by adopting more environmentally friendly ways of doing things.

To build organisational readiness across different departments within the hospital, the IMH Green Committee was formed in 2022. The formation of the committee was timely when the Pharmacy Department planned to resume its 'Bring Your Own Bag' (BYOB) campaign in 2023.

Through the campaign, which was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pharmacy Department encouraged patients and caregivers to bring their own recyclable bags when collecting medications from the dispensary instead of receiving plastic bags.



*Right: Picture of tote bag, upcycled by patients under Slow Stream Rehabilitation programme from used t-shirts*



"By early 2024, together with the Green Committee, Allied Health Operations, and staff from the Slow Stream Rehabilitation programme, we installed a BYOB rack at our outpatient clinic B. Staff, patients, and caregivers were encouraged to donate reusable carriers and t-shirts into the containers on the bag rack. The t-shirts were then upcycled into tote bags by patients participating in the Slow Stream Rehabilitation Programme. Patients or caregivers who require carriers when collecting medications from the pharmacy can take the donated carriers or the upcycled tote bags from the rack," shared Franky, one of the pharmacists involved in the project. This initiative has contributed to an estimated 11% reduction of plastic bag use in the pharmacy department in 2024 (as compared to the same utilization number in 2023).

*Left: Picture of the BYOB rack installed at IMH Clinic B*

The success of this initiative has led to a bigger project. "We decided to expand this initiative to raise awareness about waste reduction among a wider audience, including staff, patients, and members of the public. On behalf of the IMH Green Committee, Samantha Ong (IMH Director of Operations) and I presented the idea, and we successfully secured the SG Eco Fund (Sprout Grant category) for our project, "Upcycling T-Shirts into Tote Bags: Reducing Waste and Engaging the Community"," shared Yun Qi, Sustainability Officer for IMH.

"Through this project, we aim to reduce plastic bag waste by creating reusable tote bags and promoting "bring your own" initiatives. Additionally, we seek to engage patients and community members in sustainability practices, provide a creative and therapeutic activity for patients, and foster community involvement and collaboration. We will guide patients in learning the skills to upcycle t-shirts into tote bags and other crafts, enabling them to engage staff and members of the public through workshop events. In this way, we are not only reducing reliance on plastic bags at the clinic but also working to destigmatise mental health by empowering patients to lead these workshops," Yun Qi elaborated on the project.

The initiative has also left a deep impact on the pharmacists involved. Franky shared reflection on his involvement, "Through the project, we have proven that pharmacists can play meaningful roles in taking care of the earth by facilitating multi-disciplinary collaborations in reducing the use of packaging materials and upcycling used materials. We hope this effort will inspire others to take more proactive steps forward to treasure our planet and preserve our future". In the encouraging words of Samantha, "Small actions lead to big changes! Let's adopt sustainable habits to protect our planet for future generations."

Article contributed by IMH Pharmacy Department

# PSS Hospital Chapter: BEST PRxACTICES Issue No: 8



## Use of pillbox to improve medication self-management in Singapore

Chong SMB<sup>1</sup>, Koh Y<sup>1</sup>, Lee JE<sup>2</sup>, Tan H<sup>3</sup>, Lee LS<sup>4</sup>, Pang TY<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Nursing, Woodlands Health

<sup>4</sup>Occupational Therapy, Woodlands Health

<sup>5</sup>Pharmacy, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

**Background:** Non-adherence to medications results in large unnecessary expenditure in the United States of America. Pillboxes are effective interventions to support medication adherence. However, medication adherence may still be compromised in patients with dementia or with dexterity issues

**Aim:** To understand how pillboxes are being used in the local population, the challenges faced and user perception on smart pillboxes.

**Methodology:** One to one interview; The following was evaluated using questionnaire:







1. User demographics
2. Description on type of pillbox used and how it is being used
3. User satisfaction
4. Evaluation of 6 pillbox prototypes

Protocol approved by IRB: DSRB 2021/00786; Study Supported by WH SPROUTS Grant

# PSS Hospital Chapter: BEST PRxACTICES

## Issue No: 8

### *Pillbox Prototype Evaluation*

| Rank   | (Unique) Features   | What participants like & dislike   |
|--|---|--|
| #1    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard pillbox</li> </ul>  | (+) Lightweight<br>(-) Lids not secure, labels will fade, font can be bigger   |
| #2    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Push button</li> </ul>   | (+) Lid is secure, easy to open<br>(-) Too big, slightly heavy   |
| #3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alarm, light indicator</li> <li>Detachable compartments</li> </ul>       | (+) Sturdy, lid is tight<br>(-) Alarm and light not necessary, labels not clear, heavy, need to change batteries     |
| #4  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible lids</li> <li>Mobile app</li> </ul>                             | (+) Portable, transparent<br>(-) Compartments too big, labels not clear, lids are not airtight                       |
| #5  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sort by pill type</li> <li>Dose indicator</li> <li>Mobile app</li> </ul> | (+) Easy to refill<br>(-) Hard to open and close, not user friendly, need to charge, dislikes linking to phone       |
| #6  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automatic dispenser</li> <li>Alarm, light and lock</li> </ul>            | (+) Many compartments<br>(-) Too heavy, difficult to flip and retrieve pill, too complicated to use, lock not useful |

- **Most important features:** 1) Weight 2) Size of pillbox 3) Ease of pill retrieval
- **Least important features:** 1) Security 2) Light indicator 3) SMART technology

**Results:** 1048 participants were screened between 17Jan and 25Mar 2022.

Out of 278 patients who take their medications independently, 37% are pillbox users. A total of 69 participants were recruited – 59 are current pillbox users and 10 are ex-pillbox users.

|                                      | Current pillbox user | Ex-pillbox users    |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Age</b>                           | <b>65 years old</b>  | <b>60 years old</b> |
| <b>Average number of medications</b> | <b>10</b>            | <b>8</b>            |

# PSS Hospital Chapter: BEST PRxACTICES Issue No: 8

## Results:

MAIN reasons for using pillbox are:

- Serves as good reminder
- Convenience

**Improvement in compliance** from from 40% to 57% for current users who adopted the use of pillbox.

**90% of current pillbox users are satisfied with their pillbox** while only 20% of ex-pillbox users are satisfied with their pillbox.

Weight, size of pillbox and ease of pill retrieval were listed as most important features for pillbox.



## Discussion:

- Pillbox use increased medication compliance by 43%.
- Unintentional nonadherence accounts for the overall low medication compliance reported. These patients relied on their memory to take medications.
- Smart pillboxes can be an attractive option for patients who struggle with medication compliance due to forgetfulness. However, this study showed pillbox users have low acceptance of smart pillboxes.

## Limitations:

- Responses on pillbox prototype were based on perception and not actual user experience.
- Participants were older; Less enthused by technological advancements; May not be representative of future generations who may be more technologically-savvy.

## Conclusions

- Current pillbox users are contented with their existing standard pillbox and do not find smart pillboxes necessary.
- Current generation of patients place emphasis on ease of use and practicality of pillboxes.
- The utility of smart pillboxes in improving compliance remains to be proven as patients are gradually leaning towards technology.

# PSS Inaugural Hackathon Feature!

*Article and Photo contribution: SGHackitRx 2024 Core Organizing Committee*



*Judges for the finals, deep in discussion. Dr. Vivianne Shih (PSS), Ms. Evelyn Pang, (Moderna Biotech Singapore), Dr. Kelvin Tan (SUSS), Mr Melvin Foo (Quest Ventures), Dr Lee Phin Peng (Singapore Biodesign) with Ms Sharon Yeo and Mr Desmon Teo from SGHackitRx committee*

The inaugural #SGHackitRx hackathon “Ageing Well: Innovation for Super Aged Societies”, organized by the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore (PSS) concluded successfully. This was supported by Programme Partner: Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS-Nunchi Marine Age Well Programme) and event partners Asia Startup Network. NUS enterprise and Quest Ventures, Alexandra Hospital, AI Singapore, SingHealth ALICE, AWS, Open Government Products, Singapore Biodesign and the Singapore Global Network.

Participants first met at the pre-event session at Antler where Ms Junus Eu, CEO, Glorious, Dr Lim Seng Han, COO, Craft Health, Mr Russ Neu, Quest Ventures and Ms Sun Xinle, Altara discuss meeting the challenges of a super-aged society with moderator Mr Matt Onn. 17 teams worked over 2 days and pitched their solutions to pertinent problem statements at the semi-finals. RALPh; a chatbot that provides empowering and personalised medication information and counselling, MISSYBOT; a personalised AI bridging care for elderly breast cancer patients, and SimplePLAN, an AI empowered way to engage patients in advance care planning conversations made it to the finals at the Singapore Pharmacy Congress 2024. We congratulate the MISSYBOT team for clinching the top prize!



*Top 3 teams and judges at the finals held during the Singapore Pharmacy Congress 2024.*

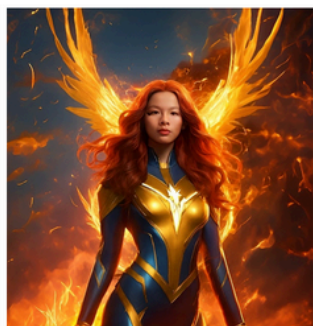
This event marked a significant milestone in our community's ability to collaborate and tackle healthcare most complex and challenging problems. The convergence of diverse expertise from multiple sectors has set a new benchmark for future hackathons. Plans are underway for subsequent editions. The organizing team would like to thank our generous sponsors and partners of SGHackitRx 2024, and all the participants who made this event possible, and also fun!

### SGHackitRx 2024 Core Organizing Committee



**Sharon Yeo**

*Leader of the Pack*  
Expert in pharmacy informatics, committed to healthcare transformations with innovative digital solutions



**Ng Ning**

*Strategist of Influence*  
Trailblazer in AI and digital health, enthusiastic in catalyzing change in healthcare delivery



**Desmond Teo**

*Architect of Efficiency*  
Data science and public health specialist, leveraging the power of data to advance medication safety



**Vivian Chin**

*Keeper of the Ledger*  
Digital transformation and business development strategist, creating impact in the healthcare industry



**Tsingyi Koh**

*Catalyst for Change*  
Leading healthcare strategy and clinical operations, shaping innovative models of care in healthcare



**Evelyn Pang**

*Defender of Dreams*  
Dynamic healthcare leader and entrepreneur mentor, building strong teams and driving transformations in medicine



**Tat Ming Ng**

*Champion of Collaboration*  
Master of evidence-based pharmacy research, growing collaborations and support for innovation community



**Jasmine Ong**

*Seer of Synergies*  
Clinician innovator and health AI maverick, driving creative solutions and impactful healthcare innovations

# Empowering Careers: Insights from the Early Career Development and Mentorship Panel & Networking Session



The PSS Industry Chapter, in collaboration with NUS, successfully brought back the Industrial Seminar Series, this time focusing on Early Career Development and Mentorship. The panel discussion and networking session provided valuable insights on navigating career transitions, developing professional skills, and leveraging mentorship for career growth.

Key takeaways from the session:

- **Embracing Opportunities:** Career transitions often arise from unexpected opportunities. Staying open-minded and adaptable is essential for long-term growth.
- **Leveraging Mentorship:** A good mentor can offer invaluable guidance, help navigate uncertainties, and challenge perspectives to foster growth.
- **Building a Strong Network:** Professional connections play a key role in career progression. Attending industry events and networking sessions is an excellent way to find mentors and new career opportunities.
- **Continuous Learning:** The ability to learn and upskill is vital to staying relevant in an ever-evolving job market.

The session saw active participation from students and early-career professionals, who came prepared with thoughtful questions, contributing to a lively and dynamic discussion. The positive feedback from attendees highlighted the session's impact in providing actionable career insights and fostering meaningful professional relationships. It also emphasized the importance of creating platforms for career conversations and mentorship within the industry. The PSS Industry Chapter is excited to continue organizing initiatives that support professionals at various stages of their careers.



# PSS SHINING STAR

Hi, I'm Helena, a Senior Pharmacist at Watsons Singapore, with over 10 years of experience in community pharmacy.

Throughout my career, I have been dedicated to providing personalized care both in-store and beyond to optimize patient health. Currently, I lead the Watsons Diabetes Care team, an initiatives to improve diabetes management in the community. I also joined the Watsons Intermediate and Long-Term Care team, delivering medication reviews and patient care services to nursing home residents.

Beyond clinical practice, I am passionate about advancing the pharmacy profession. I have contributed to the development of clinical guidelines through the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore's (PSS) PGMA workgroup and shared knowledge through continuing professional education (CPE) talk for pharmacists during my earlier years. Additionally, I mentor and train NUS pharmacy interns, helping to nurture the next generation of pharmacists.

I also make time to volunteer through meaningful projects, such as the NUS Health TAG event, which empowers the public to take ownership of their health.

My experience managing a high-volume dispensary prepared me for an exciting challenge—launching a new dispensary and nurturing its growth. Five years on, seeing how it has flourished and the impact we've made on the community is incredibly rewarding.

I am truly grateful for the diverse opportunities I have had in my career, each shaping my journey and reinforcing my passion for advancing pharmacy practice.





# PSS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



In this April issue of “In the Spotlight”, Hospital Chapter is honoured to feature Mr Louis Lim Kian Huat, Principal Clinical Pharmacist at the National University Hospital (NUH).

Louis graduated from National University of Singapore with a degree in Pharmacy in 2011 and completed his pre-registration training in NUH 2012. He practised in the outpatient setting for 3 years before embarking on the NUH Pharmacy Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) Residency in 2015. Upon completion, he returned to join the inpatient pharmacy section, subsequently proceeding to cover paediatrics and Antimicrobial Stewardship Programme (ASP) services. He went on to further his studies and completed his Master of Clinical Pharmacy degree at University of South Australia.

In 2021, Louis and his team set up a pharmacy at NUH Children's Urgent Care Clinic @ Bukit Panjang, managed by Dispensing Pharmacy Technicians. In 2022, Louis was appointed Co-Chairperson of the NUH Pharmacy Assistant and Pharmacy Technician (PAPT) Governance Committee, overseeing competency and training matters pertaining to PAPT.

Besides his current roles in NUH, Louis joined PSS in 2023 as Council Member and Ex-Officio for Professional Education and the Pre-Registration Pharmacist Training Programme. We are glad to have Louis share with us here on what continues to drive his passion in Pharmacy.

## Describe the most satisfying/fulfilling day in your life as a pharmacist.

This happened 11 years ago, but I could still remember it quite clearly. I was at the outpatient dispensing counter getting ready to counsel and dispense a bunch of cloxacillin suspensions.

After calling the queue number, I was greeted by a very distressed mother, and accompanying her was her almost teenage son, whose body was covered with eczematous skin. The boy was wailing in pain. I could also see tears rolling down the mother's cheeks.

"Mum, don't cry already", the boy uttered in between his sobs.

While I did not know the story of this mother-son pair, I knew that both are suffering. As much as it was heart-breaking to see them and make them wait long for medications, I could not cry with them because that would not have helped the situation. So, I put up a nice and encouraging smile to calm the boy, counselled and reassured the mother about the medications, and discussed with the physician to add on some medications covered by funding. Once that was done, the boy stopped crying, and they could finally leave.

Although it was just one encounter, it has impacted me to this day. It reaffirmed to me, my purpose in this Pharmacy profession: that I was not just dispensing medication as the last stop of the hospital visit. I was given the opportunity to offer comfort and encouragement through the provision of pharmaceutical care with sincerity, even though it was just a brief encounter.



## Who is your role model that inspired you to excel in the pharmacy field that you chose?



Mr Wu Tuck Seng is my role model.

Reflecting on my career as a young pharmacist, I was very fortunate to have received mentoring from him. While he has dispensed numerous pearls of wisdom in solving problems encountered in the hospital pharmacy, what stood out most was his servant leadership. He often goes down to the ground to survey work processes and connect with our staff.

He is very purpose driven. Once he sets his mind on achieving his goal, he will rally his team to go for it. The results show, as evident from the establishment of the Outpatient Pharmacy Automation System (OPAS) and Closed Loop Medication Management (CLMM) system in NUH.

Even after retirement, he remains active in helping his friends using his knowledge, skills and expertise. He taught me that in everything we do, we must think of the people. "It's always about the people".

## What would your best advice be for the younger pharmacists, especially when faced with challenges, to motivate them and keep them going?



- View every task assigned to you as an opportunity to learn and grow. Even though the task may appear daunting, boring or simply too easy, there is always something to gain and learn from the process.
- While the reward for a job well done could be more tasks, take it one step at time and pace yourself!
- Make, and sometimes, fight for time for family, friends and hobbies.



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