



Press Releases

Speech by Acting CEO & COO, Dr Eugene Fidelis Soh - Official Opening of TTSH B2 Pharmacy w/ Soft Launch of OPAS

15 September 2014

Minister for Health, Mr Gan Kim Yong
NHG Board & Management
Our Partners & Colleagues
Invited Guests & Friends,

Good Afternoon.

Welcome to the launch of our new Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Pharmacy featuring our Outpatient Pharmacy Automation System (in short OPAS). OPAS is an integral part of the transformation of our pharmacy services. Through the latest automation, we hope to deliver on a truly exceptional experience that our patients and staff value.

Our patients, caregivers and volunteers have driven the re-design of our pharmacy. Some of them are here with us today. I would like to acknowledge Mr Michael Wong, Ms Sophia Dorothy Samy and Ms Jenny Lim who are in the audience. We have learned much from our patients and would like to thank each of them for their contribution. Please join me in acknowledging them with a round of applause.

Waiting time has been an important consideration in our patients' experience at the pharmacy. With the increasing number of patients to TTSH and the complexities in providing care and medications to them, it is becoming more challenging to deliver on our patients' expectations.

While we have started home delivery for medications a few years ago, many of our patients continue to pick up their medications on site following their visit to the clinic. They do so to have immediate access to their medications. They can also seek clarification face to face with our pharmacists on their medication use.

Our survey has also shown that waiting more than 18 minutes would be a frustration to our patients in collecting their medications on site. We have done well operationally through the use of satellite pharmacies to cut waiting time to 20 minutes to serve most of our patients. This however does not meet all of our patients' expectations.

With healthcare becoming more complex, our patients often request for help from our pharmacy to verify their medication supply from home; to help them understand any change in their prescriptions; and to help them decide as to what and how much medications they would need to obtain.

Our pharmacy staff have put in extraordinary efforts, but they continue to face tremendous challenges in delivering care to our patients. Backend, they face a different set of challenges. In Asia and Singapore, medications come in different packaging as they are procured from different sources overseas - these can be in loose pills, boxes, blisters or bottles. The types of medications available have also increased significantly. Medications are also dispensed in different combinations with varying amounts according to our patients' needs. It makes the task of dispensing medications increasingly complex, with increased potential for human error.

Listening to our patients and staff, we decided to challenge the current paradigms and set out three stretch goals in the transformation of our pharmacy:

1. First, an Exceptional Patient Experience with Zero Needless Wait
2. Second, Increased Staff Productivity with Zero Needless Re-Work
3. Third, the Highest Safety Standards with Zero Preventable Errors

We sourced worldwide and selected the best pharmacy technologies with proven productivity, speed and safety. For e.g., the red dot design award winner, ROWA which is a robotic box-picking solution from Germany. ROWA is the dominant market leader for pharmacy automation in Europe. The same goes for PARATA, which is the leading high speed robotic loose pill packing machine from the USA.

While these impressive technologies have been developed and deployed in Europe and USA, for the first time worldwide, Singapore has integrated them as part of a seamless and full outpatient pharmacy automation system to meet our complex needs.

This is achieved through a specially designed software and a robotic RFID-enabled conveyor system developed by NCS and IHIS. We can now achieve an unprecedented full automation for 80% of medications at our outpatient pharmacy. The headcount needed to pick and pack

medications will be reduced by a significant 60%. We are redeploying these headcounts to do higher value work in supporting direct patient care in the clinics. For example, medication supply verification that will reduce rework in our pharmacy.


Today, with our strategic partners MOH, IHIS, NUH, and NHG Pharmacy; and our industry partners NCS and Medquest, TTSH celebrates the opening of our new pharmacy with the soft launch of our Outpatient Pharmacy Automation System. OPAS will be progressively rolled out to all patients by early 2015.

OPAS is a wonderful testimony of the strong collaboration between our public healthcare sector and industry partners to innovate and adopt new technologies that enhance our patient experience, staff productivity, and medication safety. Congratulations to our Pharmacy staff for their outstanding work in transforming their services!

My sincere appreciation to Minister, our partners, patients and guests for gracing the event today.

Thank you.

Dr Eugene Fidelis Soh,
Acting CEO and COO

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