



PRESS RELEASE

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PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE: The Singapore National Stroke Association's befriending team for Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital has reached out to 1400 stroke patients

1. Volunteers from the Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA) have reached a milestone of befriending 1400 stroke patients at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH). The achievement was attained in January 2015 and is a testament to the continuous efforts of the volunteer befrienders, many of whom are stroke survivors themselves.

2. The nine dedicated volunteers from the befriending team visit the stroke wards of TTSH weekly and KTPH monthly. There, they provide a listening ear, and offer comfort and support to stroke patients and their families, many of whom are distressed or depressed. The goals of each session include helping patients manage their distress, develop a positive mindset, and renew their hope of a possible recovery or life after stroke. SNSA recently received a certificate of appreciation from TTSH during their celebration of International Volunteer Day on 5th December 2014.

3. Five members of the befriending team are themselves stroke survivors. They are often able to understand the deep emotional distress and challenges faced by stroke patients, and use their valuable and personal experiences to help them. Mr Selamat Ali, a former stroke patient, was very encouraged by a volunteer who visited him in hospital. Now, he visits the TTSH stroke ward weekly as an SNSA befriender to cheer patients while sharing his own experiences and providing tips to help them cope with their conditions.

4. Vice-President of SNSA and stroke survivor, Mr Eugene Escanan, has been heading the befriending team at TTSH and KTPH since 2010 and 2012 respectively. He said, "There are stroke patients who are motivated and encouraged to join us as volunteers after they are discharged from hospital and have regained some of their health and emotional stability. Together, we work to serve a common purpose of helping stroke patients and their caregivers, and to raise awareness about stroke. We enjoy what we do, and we even bring cheer and ease the burden of nurses attending to patients in the ward."

5. Ms Lim Guat Sin, Senior Nurse Manager (Acute Stroke Unit, Ward 10B), TTSH, said, "As the volunteers from SNSA are stroke survivors themselves, this befriending programme has benefitted stroke patients in many ways. It's nothing like hearing from the stroke survivors themselves. They were able to identify and share their experiences, encouraging

and motivating the patients in rehabilitation to recover. It shows that there is always hope for recovery."

6. Ms Lee Ngok Lin, Nurse Manager (Department of Case Management), KTPH, said, "We are grateful for the SNSA volunteers who are willing to spend the time and effort to travel down to our hospital regularly. They have touched the lives of our stroke patients and helped them increase their confidence in getting back to society."

7. SNSA has befriending teams in two other hospitals – Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Hospital and Bright Vision Hospital. Befriending services have been one of SNSA's core programmes since it began in 1996. SNSA welcomes volunteers to join its befriending teams. All volunteers will have to attend an induction programme before they are equipped with the necessary skills to befriend stroke patients.

8. Stroke is common; three to four out of every 100 Singapore residents over 50 years old has suffered from a stroke. Singapore will experience a rise in stroke incidence with our ageing population. Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability, and survivors have to cope with the physical, psychological, cognitive and social consequences of stroke for the rest of their lives.

9. The SNSA is the only national stroke support group in Singapore. Our missions are to support stroke survivors and their families and to raise stroke awareness and advocacy in Singapore.

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About the Singapore National Stroke Association

The Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA) is the first stroke support group to be formed on a national level. It was registered under the Societies Act in December 1996 and was granted Charity Status in November 1998. The Association is a member of the Health Endowment Fund and the National Council of Social Service since 1999. It was founded by stroke survivors and caregivers with the guidance from doctors and health professionals. The Association depends fully on the generosity of individual and corporate donors for financial support. The SNSA does not replace the work of other government or private organizations in this space, but rather seeks to complement their good work.

SNSA strives to offer an avenue of help, support and information to stroke survivors and caregivers in their hour of need and to educate the public so that stroke incidence in Singapore can be reduced. For more information, please visit: www.snsa.org.sg

Some of SNSA's core programmes include:

Befriending Services: The SNSA conducts befriending services at hospitals during which our volunteers interact with recent stroke patients providing support and a listening ear, sharing experiences and offering hope and encouragement during their recovery. SNSA currently has befriending services at Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, and we recently expanded our services to include Bright Vision Hospital.

Stroke Clubs: SNSA organises stroke club sessions which include talks by healthcare professionals, sharing sessions and social activities. The sessions provide a platform for stroke survivors, their caregivers and healthcare professionals to meet, interact, and receive support and information.

Social Integration: SNSA organises social integration outings, aimed at promoting the reintegration of stroke survivors back into the community. Stroke survivors and their caregivers participate in visits to places of interest around Singapore, watching movies, and having a meal together.

Public Education: SNSA conducts talks and forums and produces educational material to increase stroke awareness. We have actively partnered with various agencies in stroke awareness projects. In addition, the SNSA publishes a newsletter StrokeWatch.

Stroke Advocacy: SNSA participates in various focus groups and discussions as an advocate for stroke survivors. SNSA participated in the WSO's global Bill of Rights for stroke survivors, being launched in October 2014. We had a representative on the drafting committee and provided feedback on initial drafts.