



GEROPSYCHOLOGY IN SINGAPORE

Changi General Hospital (CGH) is a 1000-bed acute general hospital catering to the needs of a population of more than one million people in the Eastern region of Singapore. The CGH clinical psychology department consists of a team of qualified and well-represented clinical psychologists, both new and experienced. New clinical psychologists are provided a rigorous and nurturing environment within hospitals. They are actively involved in collaborative interdisciplinary initiatives and community outreach projects, multi-disciplinary case discussions about patient care, and offered training and upskilling opportunities. Increasingly, new clinical psychologists contend with the need to specialise in a specific healthcare setting or focus on a clinical population group too soon in their career. This could likely stifle the development of diverse and interdisciplinary thinking. It appears beneficial for one to first learn about their personal and professional abilities and nurture their proclivities in a generalised healthcare setting.

The geriatric psychiatry liaison programme is a multi-disciplinary initiative actively participated in by clinical psychologists. This programme has been operational since 2013 under the Ministry of Health directive to improve detection rates and management of dementia in geriatric wards in CGH. As dementia, delirium and depression are common psychiatric conditions affecting hospitalised older people, this holistic service aims to ensure improved outcomes and better care delivery. The geriatric psychiatry liaison programme operates on a bi-weekly basis involving a multi-disciplinary team comprising a geriatric psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, and a nurse. The team provides a comprehensive psychiatric assessment, intervention and management plan for patients referred from any of the five geriatric wards in CGH. The assessment includes a diagnosis of psychiatric conditions and the use of cognitive screening tools. Consultations, assessments and interventions are provided by clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech therapists. Collaborative medical and psychological management of older persons are jointly made with consultant geriatricians in the ward. Clinical psychologists from this programme play an instrumental role in the training of nursing staff from geriatric wards in a group based learning approach. The monthly training sessions involve a case-based learning pedagogy utilising the Dementia Enriched Model and discussions are rooted in person centred care principles.

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