7 June 2017

For Immediate Release

Tele-DERM brings Specialist Skin Care Closer to the Community
Joint collaboration by NSC and NHGP wins National Health IT Excellence Awards 2017

Patients with skin conditions requiring a degree of specialised care now have the option of being treated closer to home through Tele-DERM, a joint initiative of the National Skin Centre (NSC) and National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP). Tele-DERM is an e-consult service that enables NHGP family doctors to discuss skin care cases and treatment options with NSC dermatologists in a convenient and prompt manner. It reduces the need for patients to go for additional follow-up appointments at NSC and allows them to receive dermatological care at NHG Polyclinics sooner.

For enabling better integration between primary and specialist care for patients with skin conditions, Tele-DERM clinched the IT Excellence: Beyond Hospital to Community Award at the National Health IT Excellence Awards 2017.

Improving Accessibility to Specialist Skin Care in the Community
The Tele-DERM service was piloted by NSC at Hougang Polyclinic in January 2016, and thereafter implemented at all nine NHG Polyclinics by December 2016. As of April 2017, about 920 cases have been seen by NHGP’s family doctors equipped with dermatology skills. Of these, 174 cases were referred to NSC’s specialists for additional review via Tele-DERM.

“The application of telehealth technology is well-suited to dermatology consultations and follow-ups, as doctors are able to make quick, accurate visual diagnoses using high-resolution images of skin conditions, without a physical visit,” said Associate Professor Tan Suat Hoon, Director, NSC. “Tele-DERM makes specialist skin consultation more accessible in the community and better supports our NHG Polyclinic colleagues and their patients to continue management in the primary care setting, instead of an onward referral to NSC. This brings about greater convenience to patients for treatment and follow-up, and also frees up clinic appointment slots at NSC for patients with more severe and complex conditions.”

Harnessing Technology for Better Care
Tele-DERM is a secure web-based platform which allows the upload and instant transfer of data between NSC and NHGP. Patients with skin conditions are seen at one of nine NHG Polyclinics. Those requiring further dermatological care are referred to the family doctors with training in family practice dermatology.

If an additional specialist review is required, patient case notes, medical history, as well as high-resolution images of the skin condition are taken and uploaded onto the secured Tele-DERM platform. An NSC dermatologist on standby reviews the case, and discusses viable treatment
options with the NHGP family doctors via the platform’s messaging portal. The average turnaround time for this process is about 30 minutes.

Building a Strong Primary Care Foundation
With Singapore’s rapidly ageing population and growing chronic disease burden, the number of patients who require skin care management is expected to increase. As a person ages, their skin gradually loses its ability to renew and heal itself. Dry, itchy skin that is susceptible to infections or injury is especially common in the elderly. Some chronic diseases like diabetes can also lead to skin problems.

“Primary care is the bedrock of a strong healthcare system as it serves as a key touch point for patients in the community. Tele-DERM is another important step forward in our primary healthcare transformation journey as it empowers our family doctors to provide more holistic treatment, while providing greater convenience for patients and caregivers,” said Dr Karen Ng, Director, Clinical Services, NHGP.

Since last November, Tele-DERM was also extended to inpatients at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). About 80 inpatients at IMH have benefitted from the service so far. Potential partners include other polyclinics, nursing homes and home care physicians.

--- END ---

For more information, please contact:

Ms Hamidah Aidillah
Senior Executive
Group Corporate Communications
National Healthcare Group
Tel: 6496 6264 / 9661 7141
Email: hamidah_aidillah@nhg.com.sg

Ms Lydia Soh
Manager
Group Corporate Communications
National Healthcare Group
Tel: 6496 6947 / 9842 8571
Email: lydia_cc_soh@nhg.com.sg

Mr Jayakumar S/O Poomi Nathan
Assistant Manager
Corporate Communications
National Healthcare Group Polyclinics
Tel: 6496 2340 / 9720 9781
Email: jayakumar_poomi_nathan@nhgp.com.sg

Ms Nathalie Ng
Executive
Corporate Communications
National Skin Centre
Tel: 6350 8231 / 9615 5410
Email: nathalieng@nsc.com.sg
About National Skin Centre

The National Skin Centre (NSC) is an outpatient specialist dermatological centre with a team of dermatologists who have the experience and expertise to treat a wide variety of skin conditions. As a subsidiary of the National Healthcare Group, NSC shares the NHG vision of ‘adding years of healthy life’ to the Singapore population. With a comprehensive range of subspecialty services, and serving about 80 percent of dermatology outpatients in Singapore, NSC is firmly established as a reputable dermatology centre in Singapore and the region. The Centre also aims to facilitate subspecialisation and be the national focus for the treatment, research, and training on all aspects of skin diseases.

About National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) forms the primary healthcare arm of the National Healthcare Group (NHG). Its nine polyclinics serve a significant proportion of the population in the central, northern and western parts of Singapore. NHGP provides a comprehensive range of health services for the family, functioning as a one stop health centre providing treatment for acute medical conditions, management of chronic diseases, women & child health services and dental care. The focus of NHGP’s care is on health promotion and disease prevention, early and accurate diagnosis, disease management through physician led team-based care as well as enhancing the capability of Family Medicine through research and teaching. Through the Family Medicine Academy and the NHG Family Medicine Residency Programme, NHGP plays an integral role in the delivery of primary care training at medical undergraduate and post-graduate levels. NHGP has also been awarded the prestigious Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation under the Primary Care Standards. For information, please visit us at https://www.nhgp.com.sg

About the National Healthcare Group

The National Healthcare Group (NHG) is a leader in public healthcare in Singapore, recognised at home and abroad for the quality of its medical expertise and facilities. Care is provided through an integrated network of nine primary healthcare polyclinics, acute care and tertiary hospitals, national specialty centres and business divisions. Together they bring a rich legacy of medical expertise to our philosophy of integrated patient-centred care. NHG’s vision is “Adding Years of Healthy Life”. This vision goes beyond merely healing the sick to the more difficult and infinitely more rewarding task of preventing illness and preserving health and quality of life. With some 13,000 staff, NHG aims to provide care that is patient-centric, accessible, seamless, comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective. As the Regional Health System (RHS) for Central Singapore, it is vital for NHG to partner and collaborate with stakeholders, community advisors, and voluntary welfare organisations. Together with our patients, their families and caregivers, we aim to deliver integrated healthcare services and programmes that help in Adding Years of Healthy Life to all concerned. More information is available at www.nhg.com.sg.
### CHINESE GLOSSARY

| 陈雪芬副教授 | Associate Professor Tan Suat Hoon  
主任 | Director  
全国皮肤中心 | National Skin Centre |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 黄明燕医生 | Dr Karen Ng  
处长，医疗事务处 | Director, Clinical Services  
国立健保集团综合诊疗所 | National Healthcare Group Polyclinics |
| 龚敬文医生 | Dr Kong Jing Wen  
助理顾问家庭医生 | Family Physician  
副主管，后港综合诊疗所 | Deputy Head, Hougang Polyclinic  
国立健保集团综合诊疗所 | National Healthcare Group Polyclinics |
| 姚益荣医生 | Dr Yew Yik Weng  
顾问医生 | Consultant  
全国皮肤中心 | National Skin Centre |
| 皮肤科远程医疗会诊 | Tele-DERM |
| 家庭医科皮肤毕业文凭课程 | Graduate Diploma in Family Practice Dermatology |
| 湿疹 | Eczema |
| 痤疮 | Acne |
| 荨麻疹 | Urticaria |