

Community hospitals linked to records grid

They will be able to access patients' medical records online

PATIENTS being referred to community hospitals from polyclinics or public hospitals need no longer worry about their records going missing or delays in getting the paperwork across.

A central database, known as the electronic medical record exchange, that allows public institutions to share information about their patients, is being extended to include community hospitals.

The first to start is Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Hospital which adopted the system at the beginning of last month.

Its chief executive officer S. Vivakanandan said this has eliminated repetition of medical assessments and lab tests and hence, streamlined the process.

"Having ready knowledge of medical information will definitely help the hospital in charting the patient's recovery progress," he said.

Before it was able to access the database, the hospital had to deal with volumes of paperwork. It could spend up to two days just to track down a patient's medical records for instance.

But now, doctors are able to access these records online within five minutes.

This will work the other way round too when its patients are referred to public hospitals. Their

records may also be easily accessed by doctors in hospitals.

Online access to records will be extended to other community hospitals, including St Luke's Hospital and Bright Vision Hospital by the first quarter of next year, the Ministry of Health said in a statement.

The electronic medical record exchange has been in place since 2004 sharing hospital inpatient discharge summaries between SingHealth and National Healthcare cluster groups.

These include blood test results, X-rays, details of drug allergies and prescribed medicines. Only doctors and health-care professionals have access to the system.

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