

Shared medical records system extended to community hospitals

ALICIA WONG

alicia@mediacorp.com.sg

THE sharing of medical records through an electronic exchange will ensure that patients at community hospitals need not undergo repeated medical tests, resulting in cost savings. More importantly, they will benefit from faster diagnosis and treatment.

The extension of the Electronic Medical Records Exchange is a milestone in the deepening partnership between community and public hospitals, and Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan (AMK-THK) Community

Hospital is the first such hospital to enjoy this progressive facility.

From last month, doctors at the hospital began accessing the electronic medical records of patients referred by public hospitals, polyclinics or specialist centres, and *vice versa*.

By March, the Ministry of Health will extend the records exchange to other community hospitals – Bright Vision Hospital, Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital, St Andrew's Community Hospital and St Luke's Hospital – with 4,000 patients set to benefit.

The exchange system, first introduced in April 2004, allows public health institutions

to share Hospital Inpatient Discharge Summaries, which contain information on recent hospital visits related to the treatment of drug allergies, diagnoses, prescribed medication and response to treatment.

Other information that can be shared includes laboratory test and X-ray results, drug allergy histories and operation reports.

“Having ready access to the medical information of referred patients enables us to provide them with continued, quality care,” said Mr S Vivakanandan, CEO at AMK-THK Community Hospital.

Community hospitals are on a better

footing with knowledge of each patient's medical ailments, treatment procedures and medication history – all of which helps the hospital in charting the patient's recovery process, he told TODAY.

Close to 170 patients of the hospital are under the exchange system and “response had been all-round positive”, he added.

Patient confidentiality is strictly maintained as only doctors and healthcare professionals can access the exchange's records, the ministry said in its press release.

A further step to share medical information across the private and public medical sectors is envisioned under the 10-year Intelligent Nation 2010 blueprint.