

# All the answers on a patient's wrist

## Encoded wristbands, common databases to ease treatment

LIN YANQIN

yanqinl@newstoday.com.sg

BY NEXT April, the wristbands worn by patients at Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kuan Hospital won't be mere name tags.

Instead, they will be encoded with the latest information and instructions about the patient, so that a simple scan will tell any nurse what medication to administer, thereby reducing the chance of mistakes.

The hospital is now working with infocomm solutions company Y3 Technologies to test the system, called the Geriatric Nursing Record Exchange (Ginx) project.

Ginx is one of the many innovations carried out at 12 healthcare institutions that aim to create and implement ways of delivering better and more efficient healthcare, thanks to \$3 million worth of funding from the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA), under the Call for Collaboration scheme launched last September. In all, the 12 projects will cost \$12 million.

At AMK-Thye Hua Kuan, for example, there is no centralised database for doctors to access the patients' nursing records, which lists the treatment and medication they have received at a hospital.

This becomes a problem when patients move from one hospital to another. The patient might be prescribed and given the same medication as at the first hospital.

"It's redundant and a waste of medication," said the hospital's chief operating officer, Ms Ling Bee Sian. "If both hospitals can access a database with the patient's records, they would both know what course of treatment is to be pursued."

Ginx sets out to solve this problem with a system that automatically updates nursing records and consolidates a common database to be shared between hospitals. The database will also enable step-down facilities, such as nursing homes, to



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provide better care.

"They'll look at the treatment given and know right away their patient's condition," said Ms Ling. "It improves information flow and helps us give better care."

The IDA hopes that such innovations will generate more buzz for the healthcare industry and draw interest from overseas for solutions created by Singapore's infocomm technology sector, said the director of IDA's healthcare and social cluster, Ms Lim Bee Kwan.

Indeed, solutions such as the National Healthcare Group (NHG) and Mobile Technology's push to get doctors to trade in their pagers for mobile phones — a first in the world — has already generated interest from healthcare institutions overseas, according to NHG's project director, Dr Ho Choon Hou.

The plan, successfully implemented at Tan Tock Seng Hospital in January this year, will be carried out in all hospitals under the NHG within the next two years, and involves about 2,000 doctors making the switch to become more easily contactable.

The NHG has also developed an escalation module. In the event the first doctor contacted does not respond after 10 minutes, the message will "escalate" and be forwarded to a second doctor. "If it's approved, it will help to cut lost time in which a doctor can't be reached and help to serve the patients better," said Dr Ho.