

New master's programme to plug training gap in mental health care

Practitioners to get help supporting patients with mild to moderate symptoms

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To meet the growing demand for mental health care here, a new master's programme on clinical mental health is set to commence in January 2025.

Offered by the National University of Singapore Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and the NUHS Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre, the Master of Clinical Mental Health and Psychotherapy programme is set to fill a training gap for mental health professionals.

Dr Pearlene Ng, deputy programme director and education director of psychology of the NUHS Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre, said the programme is set to help mental health practitioners support patients who have mild to moderate symptoms of mental health conditions – or those who fall in Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the tiered care model.

The tiered care model was announced in October 2023, and it organises Singapore's mental health services and support measures according to an individual's needs.

There are four levels – ranging from mental health promotion, self-help and peer support at Tier 1, to the most intensive level of care in hospitals and specialist clinics at Tier 4.

Individuals in Tier 2 have mild symptoms and have some difficulties coping, while those in Tier 3 have moderate symptoms and have more difficulties coping.

Announcing the programme at a



National Development Minister Desmond Lee touring an immersive exhibition called Nature's Embrace: A Gift To The Mind at Alexandra Hospital on March 21. The six-month-long exhibition is designed based on local studies that looked into the relationship between urban green spaces and mental health. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

mental wellness exhibition at Alexandra Hospital on March 21, National Development Minister Desmond Lee said the programme brings in leading industry partners, such as social service agencies and healthcare providers, to provide supervised clinical placements and training.

"Students will not only be exposed to general counselling and psychotherapy, but also systemic and family therapy, to allow them to gain a better understanding of how different factors impact mental health," said Mr Lee, who is also Minister-in-charge of Social Services Integration.

Dr Ng explained that the current master's programmes offered here are either in clinical psychology,

which trains professionals to deal with those with severe conditions, or counselling, which equips practitioners to help those with interpersonal or relationship problems.

"In order to meet growing mental health needs, Singapore would need to train mental health practitioners like counsellors or psychotherapists. Not everyone would need to see a psychologist at Tier 4 level," she said.

Students will also learn stress, anxiety and mood management across different age segments, and how to manage and de-escalate the situation with a distressed individual.

Offered full-time at 18 months and part-time at 30 months, the new programme is targeted to take

in 20 students for its first intake, with plans to increase to up to 50 students per intake in five to six years' time, said Dr Ng.

Those applying for the programme must have a relevant bachelor's degree with honours from a recognised university in psychology, nursing, medicine, occupational therapy, allied health or social work. They must also have at least one to three years of experience in providing direct care to persons with mental health issues.

Applications close on May 1.

At the event, Mr Lee toured an immersive exhibition called Nature's Embrace: A Gift To The Mind. Held at Level 2 of Block 29 of Alexandra Hospital, the six-month-long exhibition is designed

based on local studies that looked into the relationship between urban green spaces and mental health.

It features a blend of nature and creative exhibits, such as a terrarium and moss art display, a dry garden, as well as a virtual forest walking experience, which explore the connection between mind, body and nature.

From March 22 to April 22, members of the public can walk in to the exhibition from Mondays to Fridays from 10am to 5pm, and on Saturdays from 10am to 2pm.

From April 23, visitors will have to book an appointment via e-mail at for.sg/maelabbooking

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