



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

### **Inclusive Healthcare Symposium Explores the Development of a Healthcare Model for Persons with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (PWIDD)**

- *Themed “Towards a Singapore model for providing effective healthcare management for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families”, the symposium brought global and local experts together to explore initiatives to improve the healthcare management for PWIDD and a possible healthcare model for PWIDD.*
- *Featuring healthcare practitioners, academia, caregivers and representatives from social service agencies and regulatory bodies coming together as participants, the symposium offered a focus dialogue in the healthcare management for PWIDD and their caregivers.*

**1 February 2020** - The Inclusive Healthcare Symposium was held today, featuring global experts of different specialties to shed light on policies and practices of the healthcare management for PWIDD adopted worldwide, and explore the development of an effective healthcare model for PWIDD in Singapore. Gracing the symposium as Guest-of-Honour was **Dr Gerard Ee, Chairman of Agency of Integrated Care (AIC)**.

Organised by MINDS, **Dr. Matthew P. Janicki, Co-Chair of the U.S. National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices, U.S.A.**, delivered the keynote address entitled “Influencing Policy and Practice to Improve Healthcare for PWIDD”, where he stressed the importance of adopting a lifespan approach in managing PWIDD’s healthcare to effectively plan and provide appropriate healthcare services for them so as to facilitate quality of life and healthy ageing.

The full-day Symposium witnessed inter-disciplinary dialogues between healthcare practitioners, academia, caregivers and representatives from social service agencies and regulatory bodies, offering a renewed focus in healthcare management for PWIDD and their caregivers. Through the Symposium, MINDS seek to explore the development of an effective healthcare model for PWIDD and their caregivers in Singapore.

Studies have revealed that PWIDD face more health issues and are at greater risks of developing health conditions compared to those without. Further compounding this issue is that PWIDD experience a multitude of barriers accessing to quality healthcare and achievement of desired outcomes. Such barriers include:

1. **Attitudinal Barriers**

Stigmatisation of PWIDD has driven families into social isolation, leaving the management of healthcare solely to caregivers, who conversely have very little knowledge in managing the healthcare for PWIDD.

2. **Communication Barriers**

Absence of proper and effective communication between medical practitioner and PWIDD has often resulted in poorer quality of healthcare provision for PWIDD.

3. **Physical Barriers**

Absence of a conducive environment such as an autism-friendly space to help persons with autism to cope with their surroundings and senses, often discourages caregivers to bring their charges out unless necessary.

4. **Data Barriers**

Absence of a local database for healthcare in PWIDD to drive evidence-based practice, research and training for medical professionals that could potentially help individualise the care for PWIDD and reduce the cost.

5. **Programme Barriers**

Insufficient time set aside for medical examination and procedures has often resulted in ineffective delivery of healthcare programme. For example, studies have shown that it takes eight times more time to examine the dental health of a PWIDD.

Against this backdrop, MINDS led a group of experts from the healthcare, social service and academic sectors to embark on a journey to improve the healthcare management of PWIDDs and their caregivers by studying and researching into healthcare best practices and policies for PWIDDs, and boosting PWIDD healthcare literacy levels among caregivers.

The Inclusive Healthcare Symposium marked the culmination of the Workgroup efforts to drive the next stage of development of an effective healthcare model for PWIDD and their caregivers.

**Providing a Comprehensive Perspective on PWIDD Healthcare Management**

The symposium featured a panel of speakers that provided a comprehensive perspective on healthcare for PWIDD by examining the various healthcare models for PWIDD that different countries prescribe to and how such models were being translated into actions to produce better health outcomes for PWIDD.

**Professor Nicholas Lennox, Queensland Centre for Intellectual & Developmental Disability (QCIDD), University of Queensland, Australia,** brought the audience through the various models of healthcare for PWIDD, drawing on 28 years of experience and observation of how intellectual disability healthcare policy and practice were influenced in Australia and elsewhere.

**Adjunct Professor Jeffrey Chan Senior Practitioner, Behaviour Support, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission, Australia,** spoke about the importance of developing a healthcare model for PWIDD in order to provide quality support while ensuring appropriate safeguards were in place.

**Professor Helene Ouellette-Kuntz, Professor, Public Health Sciences and Psychiatry, Queen's University, Canada,** demonstrated how policies at the national, provincial and regional levels in Canada had evolved; presenting both challenges and opportunities in providing quality healthcare to PWIDD.

**Mr Colin Hudson, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Mental Health Intellectual Disability, Royal North Shore Hospital, Australia,** shared his experience as a clinician and provided insights on how to build capacity in existing community health teams that enables them to complete assessments and provide clinical and behavioural supports to PWIDD.

### **Recognising the Symbiotic Relationship between PWIDD and Caregivers**

The symposium also delved deeper into the caregiver-PWIDD dynamics and how the relationship would affect the overall wellbeing of the PWIDD.

**Dr Jane Tracy, Director, Centre for Developmental Disability Health (CDDH), Monash Health, Australia,** drew attention to the role that family played in overseeing, safeguarding and contributing to the care and quality of life of PWIDD as she shared her first-hand account as a caregiver.

Recognising PWIDD and caregivers as a unique entity, **Dr Chen Shiling, Physician, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, and Tsao Foundation Community for Successful Ageing, Singapore,** presented on a newly piloted healthcare model that would look after the biopsychosocial and environmental issues of not only PWIDD, but also their caregivers holistically.

## **Developing an Effective Healthcare Model for PWIDD in Singapore**

Since the opening of MINDS Developmental Disabilities Clinic in 2018, huge strides had been made in boosting the health outcomes of PWIDD as well as PWIDD health literacy levels among caregivers. **Dr Bhavani Sriram, Paediatrician and Co-founder, MINDS Developmental Disabilities Medical Clinic Singapore**, shared her research findings on the health outcomes of her patients. Caregivers also shared some of the challenges they faced when accessing the healthcare service during the roundtable discussion.

Speaking about the Inclusive Healthcare Symposium MINDS had organised, Ms Koh Gee May, deputy CEO of MINDS said, “We could see the ambition in the stakeholders to transform the healthcare management for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By working with global experts of various specialties who had experience in managing the healthcare of PWIDD, we are able to suss out the opportunities and challenges that they face down to the granular details, and refine policies and practices to change the way we manage the healthcare of PWIDD and their caregivers.”



*Diane Olivario (left) and Jaspreet Kaur Sekhon (middle) from “Our Lives Our Voices” Programme, a self-advocate programme piloted by MINDS and Down Syndrome Association Singapore, spoke about some of the barriers they faced when accessing healthcare services as they shared about their experience while visiting the doctors.*



*Dr Bhavani Sriram, Paediatrician and Co-founder, MINDS Developmental Disabilities Medical Clinic Singapore providing an in-depth account of her experience examining PWIDD at her clinic.*



*(From left to right) Dr Chen Shiling, Dr Matthew P. Janicki, Dr Jeffrey Chan, Dr Bhavani Sriram, and Dr Colin Hudson, addressing questions raised by the audience during the panel discussion.*

## **About MINDS**

MINDS was founded in May 1962 by a group of philanthropists who saw the need to provide equal opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities to receive education and later, to be integrated as contributing and responsible citizens in Singapore.

MINDS possesses a range of facilities catered to the entire lifespan needs of 2,400 students, clients, and their families. This includes 4 Special Education schools, 3 Employment Development Centres, 8 Training and Development Centres, and a multi-service residential facility which contains a home for adults and one for children, a hostel, a Caregivers Support Services Centre, a Special Student Care Centre, a Developmental Disabilities Medical Clinic and MINDS Institute (MI). MINDS also delivers Home-Based Care Services, administers the Appropriate Adult scheme, and runs a befriender programme called Me Too! Club.

Please visit <http://www.minds.org.sg/> for more information.

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