

\$5.8 M commitment to build Singapore's first breathlessness ecosystem

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Lien Foundation and Tan Tock Seng Hospital commit S\$5.8 million to help patients with chronic lung and heart conditions



Lien Foundation and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) have launched the Air Master service, which aims to help patients with chronic lung and heart conditions learn to manage their breathlessness, pain and other symptoms. The service has started with three community care partners: AWWA, Ren Ci Hospital and St Luke's ElderCare.

Air Master is part of a larger Breathlessness Ecosystem, a network of care services that will be developed over five years with funding support of S\$5.8 million. When fully expanded, the ecosystem will benefit patients across the National Healthcare Group (NHG), including patients identified by TTSH, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Woodlands Health, seven polyclinics, and a growing primary care network of general practitioners (GPs).

Up to 5.9% and 4.5% of Singaporeans have chronic lung and heart diseases respectively. 60 to 90% of them are affected by breathlessness. Patients often associate their breathlessness with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. This deters them from exercising, resulting in diminished muscle strength, poorer mobility, and self-isolation. Up to a third of patients experience depression or anxiety.

Air Master's holistic rehabilitation service with community care partners will provide structured support much earlier for patients with chronic heart and lung conditions. TTSH will collaboratively train community care partners and enable them to deliver the Air Master service.

The ecosystem also aims to reduce healthcare costs by helping patients manage better in the community. Currently, heart and lung failure see the highest healthcare expenditure in Singapore (\$49,900 and \$42,900 respectively) during the last year of life, almost 60% higher than cancer (\$31,200). With sufficient patient volume and time, TTSH and Lien Foundation hope to demonstrate the effectiveness of bringing targeted rehabilitation and symptom-related care upstream, as well as the strength of strategic collaboration among community partners.

