First tele-health programme for heart failure patients in Singapore enables patients to better manage their health and reduce hospitalisation

Singapore, 4 September 2014 – The Eastern Health Alliance (EH Alliance) and Changi General Hospital (CGH) have partnered Philips Healthcare (Philips) to pilot Singapore’s first tele-health programme for heart failure patients in Singapore. The innovative programme integrates three key elements: tele-monitoring, tele-education, and tele-care support via the EH Alliance’s Health Management Unit (HMU) nurse telecarers. These help engage heart failure patients in the care of their health, reduce the risk of hospitalization and premature death.

Heart failure patients are frequently re-admitted to hospital; at CGH, the figure is 40% re-admitted within 12 months. A key reason is not adhering to prescribed treatment plans, for example, not taking medication correctly or consistently, not monitoring weight daily, and lapses in the control of water intake and diet. Other reasons include the progress of the disease or infection.

Programme Director and Senior Consultant of CGH’s Department of Cardiology, Dr Gerard Leong said, "Heart failure patients can enjoy a good quality of life if they are engaged in their care and given the necessary support. Education and monitoring are key components for success. Once heart failure patients understand and feel more supported and confident about how to manage their conditions, they are more likely to follow their treatment plan and make the needed lifestyle changes. In essence, this is what we aim to do with this Heart Failure Tele-health Programme."

Singapore’s first heart failure tele-health programme builds on an established heart failure programme in CGH (accredited by the Joint Commission International since 2006) and the ongoing heart failure programme by the HMU. Through these efforts, CGH has achieved a lower heart failure mortality rate than international centres.

Mr T K Udairam, Group CEO, EH Alliance added, “While CGH has achieved good outcomes, we believe we can do more for heart failure patients. Therefore we are excited by the potential of tele-health services to help heart failure patients better manage their condition and bridge care gaps between hospital and home. Simply put, we are bringing care to patients’ homes and providing the convenience for them to easily monitor themselves as part of their daily routine, and to provide information and assistance when they need it. We are glad to work with Philips to bring this programme to Singapore.”
Mr. Arjen Radder, President of Philips Healthcare in Asia Pacific said, "Philips is committed to innovation and quality improvement in patient care. Together with EH Alliance, we strive to establish a care model in Singapore that sets precedence for scalable, sustainable deployment of tele-health-enabled care coordination for heart failure patients: innovations that will help health systems address the increasing challenges of a fast aging population."

EH Alliance and CGH have worked with Philips to develop this programme and to localise it for the population here. This includes customizing programme protocols for our patients’ needs, and making the content available in English, Mandarin and Malay.

Patients enrolled in the programme are provided with the following devices:
- a personal health tablet
- a weighing machine, and
- a blood pressure monitor

These devices are used to assist them in the daily measurement of their weight, pulse and blood pressure - three key vital parameters which are automatically uploaded to a central system for monitoring. Educational materials in the form of videos are delivered remotely and are available to the patients on their tablet. The HMU nurse telecarers provide support and monitoring, and can intervene early when signs of deterioration are detected.

Mr. Fernando Erazo, Head of Philips Hospital to Home (H2H) in APAC added, “Philips tele-health programs are the result of over 15 years of investment and implementation experience in USA and Europe. Last October we launched in Singapore our H2H competence center for the region and are thus delighted to have Singapore and EH Alliance at the forefront of our efforts to localise these solutions. As the program advances, we see Singapore and EH Alliance contributing insights and experience to the network of leading American and European health systems who today practice such tele-health solutions."

This programme is facilitated by the Singapore Economic Development Board. Mr Kevin Lai, Director, Biomedical Sciences of Singapore Economic Development Board said, “We celebrate the partnership between Philips and EH Alliance which aims to co-develop the first-in-Singapore tele-health programme for heart failure patients. This collaboration is an excellent example of how companies can partner with Singapore’s healthcare clusters to co-develop and test-bed new products, solutions and business models that will benefit patients locally and from the region”.

The pilot started on 26 June 2014 and aims to enrol approximately 160 heart failure patients by October 2015.