



Teaching facilities at the National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore in Kent Ridge. Compared with the previous NUS Faculty of Dentistry, the new centre has an additional 18,000 sq m for training and research purposes. ST PHOTOS: KELVIN CHNG

# Specialist dental care gets boost with \$370m centre

New facility can see more patients, provide care for those with special needs, and more

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The opening of a new \$370 million national dental centre in Kent Ridge will significantly increase the capacity for subsidised specialist dental treatment for more severe or complex dental conditions.

The National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore will also be able to see more patients, nearly 500 a day, which is a 40 per cent increase from its patient load four years ago.

Professor John Eu-Li Wong, chief executive of the National University Health System (NUHS), said yesterday that the 11-storey, 34,000 sq m building can accommodate the relocated National University of Singapore (NUS) Faculty of Dentistry and an increased annual undergraduate student intake – from the current 60 to 80 by 2021.

The centre provides dental services in areas such as orthodontics, paediatric dentistry, periodontics, and oral and maxillofacial surgery, which addresses diseases and injuries to the face, mouth and jaw.

The centre also provides multidisciplinary specialist care for geriatric patients as well as those with special needs, and complex conditions.

All of its treatment rooms are wheelchair accessible, with one room featuring a wheelchair tilt chair that enables patients to receive treatment in their wheelchairs. There is also a bariatric dental chair for patients who may not be able to be managed in a conventional dental chair due to weight issues.

There are also four treatment rooms which are larger than usual to handle patients with special needs, such as those dealing with claustrophobia or behavioural issues.

At the event, Health Minister Gan

Kim Yong, who officially opened the new centre, announced that a new two-year part-time graduate diploma in geriatric dentistry will also start this year at the NUS Faculty of Dentistry. This is to train dentists to deliver evidence-informed care to treat the elderly.

Together with the existing National Dental Centre Singapore in the Outram Campus, the new centre will significantly increase the country's capacity for subsidised specialist dental treatment for complex dental conditions, said Mr Gan.

The new centre is part of the NUHS and is located next to the National University Hospital.

Construction took place over three years from 2015 to last year, and the centre opened to the public in January this year.

Compared to the previous NUS Faculty of Dentistry, the new centre has an additional 18,000 sq m for training and research purposes.

The prices for dental procedures at the new centre are comparable with that of the previous NUH Dental Clinic, and the average waiting

time for referred patients for their first appointment ranges from less than a month to four months.

There is no waiting time for emergency dental treatment.

Besides the NUS Faculty of Dentistry, the centre also houses training facilities for the Nanyang Polytechnic oral health therapy programme.

NUS dentistry students will get to learn in innovative ways, such as using eye tracker devices to understand the way they review and assess radiographs.

They will also be trained in the delivery of local anaesthesia through virtual learning and haptic technology, which involves using virtual tools to create the feeling of touch.

The faculty will also be able to expand key research areas like regenerative biology and tissue engineering, as well as spearhead clinical trials and population health research to better understand the mechanisms linking dental and chronic diseases here.

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Health Minister Gan Kim Yong (above, centre) visiting a specialist clinic equipped to assist patients with complex needs, such as those on wheelchairs, to be transferred to dental chairs for treatment at the National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore (left).