



## **JOINT NEWS RELEASE**

**Singapore, 6 January 2021**

### **NTU Singapore graduate students to provide free telehealth monitoring service for the community**

Nine graduate students from **Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU, Singapore)** have started an initiative to carry out a free health monitoring exercise for 1,000 people.

Known as the **Community Telehealth Service (CTS)**, it aims to provide free health monitoring at public venues such as community centres to Singaporeans above 50 years of age, as well as those who have had their regular health check-ups deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nine students are from the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and the Interdisciplinary Graduate Programme.

The check-ups will take place in specially constructed telemedicine booths that leverage the latest health technologies to test for eye and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, as well as obesity.

The computerised health screening system is provided by South Korean healthcare startup **Medi-Whale**. It uses an automated camera to take several images of a person's eye and its artificial intelligence (AI)-powered system then processes the retinal images to determine an individual's health conditions.

The pilot for the Community Telehealth Service will be held from **9 January 2021 to 28 February 2021** at Punggol 21 Community Club. Registration opened on **2 January** and interested parties can register for the telehealth screenings at <https://blogs.ntu.edu.sg/communitytelehealthservice/>.

**Dr Michelle Law**, a medical doctor who is now a PhD student at Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and leader of the project, said: "We started this initiative as we saw how the pandemic has delayed many health screenings for the elderly and those at risk of health problems. Other obstacles to getting their routine check-ups included

cost, a long commute to clinics, and crowds – all of which we intend to mitigate with CTS.”

**Dr James Lim, Business Director of Medi-Whale**, said: “We are glad to be part of the CTS project, an initiative by graduate students at NTU. In a rapidly ageing society, localised access to basic healthcare and screening will be key to the elderly quality of life. Knowledge of health risk and seeking appropriate medical treatment is vital for the elderly,” he added.

### **‘Pandemic-proof’ health screenings**

Organisers of the telehealth initiative said that they will ensure that the events adhere to safe management measures, as stipulated by the Singapore government.

Apart from online registration, operating the booths requires little to no human intervention, allowing the health ambassador volunteers from the Health Promotion Board to focus on guiding the users in the use of the devices at the booth.

**Mr Alvin Chew, a PhD student from NTU’s Interdisciplinary Graduate Programme and co-founder of CTS**, said: “With CTS, we hope to bring health screening to the community in an accessible and ‘pandemic-proof’ manner. However, the telehealth screening is meant for personal monitoring and does not replace the usual doctor appointments or annual check-ups. If any abnormalities are detected during the screening, we will refer the users to a polyclinic or hospital for a follow-up.”

**Dr Lim from Medi-Whale** added: “As a provider of a comprehensive AI-powered health screening system based on a simple eye examination, we seek to provide primary healthcare providers with early disease detection. Such community-level screening is preferred by the elderly in countries like South Korea, as it eliminates invasive tests (blood test) and minimises unnecessary hospital consultations, especially during the on-going pandemic.”

### **An outpouring of support**

The Community Telehealth Service project has received support from the Young ChangeMakers grant by **National Youth Council**, and oscar@sg by **Temasek Trust**, a fund that supports ground-up initiatives responding to community needs in Singapore arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Professor Lee Pooi See, Dean of NTU’s Graduate College** said: “The University takes pride in our graduate students for fostering the spirit of community engagement. We fully support our students in their remarkable volunteerism in embarking on this

meaningful experiential learning journey which is an excellent example of an interdisciplinary collaboration.”

The student-run initiative which aims to help relieve some of the strain on Singapore’s healthcare system, has also received backing from community partners including the **Health Promotion Board**, which has offered volunteer health ambassadors to help with facilitating the pilot. **Temasek Foundation** donated the booths for conducting the screenings.

As part of its efforts to reach out to residents in staying healthy, **Punggol 21 Community Club** collaborated in this initiative to offer telemedicine services to residents.

**Ms Yeo Wan Ling, Member of Parliament for Pasir-Ris Punggol GRC and Adviser for Pasir Ris-Punggol Grassroots Organisations** said: “We’re constantly looking for ways to engage our seniors in improving their digital literacy as well as their well-being. The community Telemedicine service will help to ensure that our seniors are able to keep their health in check conveniently with the use of technology. This collaborative initiative is in line with Punggol Shore’s aim in equipping our seniors with the digital know-hows in this new normal.”

Following the pilot, the CTS team is already working on plans to ramp up their efforts to deploy more telehealth monitoring booths in other heartland districts, in collaboration with new and existing partners.

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***About Nanyang Technological University, Singapore***

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has 33,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the

Engineering, Business, Science, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, and Graduate colleges. It also has a medical school, the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, established jointly with Imperial College London.

NTU is also home to world-renowned autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Earth Observatory of Singapore, and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI) and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Ranked amongst the world's top universities by QS, NTU has also been named the world's top young university for the last seven years. The University's main campus is frequently listed among the Top 15 most beautiful university campuses in the world and it has 57 Green Mark-certified (equivalent to LEED-certified) building projects, of which 95% are certified Green Mark Platinum. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a campus in Singapore's healthcare district.

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

For more information, visit [www.ntu.edu.sg](http://www.ntu.edu.sg)

### ***About Community Telehealth Service (CTS)***

Community Telehealth Service (CTS) is a health literacy and screening campaign that aims to foster active health monitoring habits among the people of Singapore by raising the awareness of telemedicine and health technologies.

This inaugural pilot is run by 9 graduate students of various disciplines from the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and the Interdisciplinary Graduate Programme of Nanyang Technological University Graduate College.

The student-led initiative also seeks to reform social norms surrounding health monitoring, particularly among those above 50 years old, as part of a healthful lifestyle and routine health screening.

Follow CTS social media pages for updates:

Facebook: @CommunityTelehealthService  
<https://www.facebook.com/CommunityTelehealthService/>  
Instagram: @CommunityTelehealthService  
(<https://www.instagram.com/CommunityTelehealthService/>)

### ***About People's Association***

The People's Association (PA) is a statutory board established on 1 July 1960 to promote racial harmony and social cohesion, and to act as a bridge between the Government and the people. We offer a wide range of community programmes and volunteering opportunities for Singaporeans from all walks of life.

Our network includes more than 1,800 grassroots organisations (GROs), over 100 Community Clubs, five Community Development Councils, National Community Leadership Institute and Water-Venture.

More information at [www.pa.gov.sg](http://www.pa.gov.sg).