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New Outram Community Hospital to ease bed crunch

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(http://www.straitstimes.com/sites/straitstimes.com/files/20150522/ST_20150522_OUTRAM22_1340581e.jpg)

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong (second from right) with SingHealth chief executive Ivy Ng and other guests checking out a model of Outram Community Hospital. The 550-bed community hospital will be sited next to Singapore General Hospital and is slated to open in 2020. -- ST PHOTO: AZIZ HUSSIN

BY KASH CHEONG

WHEN it opens in 2020, the new Outram Community Hospital (OCH) will help ease the national bed crunch that has seen hospitals resort to placing patients on beds in corridors.

Other new hospitals are coming onstream to alleviate the bed shortage as well.

The new 700-bed Ng Teng Fong General Hospital will open in phases from June 30 after a six-month construction delay, while Yishun Community Hospital will open in December with 170 beds, and have 428 beds when fully operational.

At OCH, patients will be able to practise getting around a two-room flat on crutches and cooking in its kitchen, with help from a therapist.

"We want to help them practise activities of daily living in a home-like environment, so that they can be discharged as soon as possible and perform these activities safely," said Professor Ang Chong Lye, chief executive of Singapore General Hospital (SGH), which will run OCH.

The model flat is one of many features in the 550-bed community hospital. Five hundred beds will be reserved for patients who no longer need acute care but still require some looking after. The rest will be for palliative care - for patients who are terminally ill.

OCH will be next to SGH, reducing the time it takes for patients to transit to the step-down facility. It will accept patients from other hospitals too, said Prof Ang.

The new community hospital is important to the nearby Bukit Merah community as the area has the second-highest number of residents aged 65 and above in Singapore, said

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong at the hospital's ground-breaking ceremony yesterday. Also, SGH is seeing more elderly patients. Last year, over 41 per cent of patients, or 32,000, admitted to and discharged from the hospital were above the age of 65.

Like Changi General Hospital's new Integrated Building, OCH will focus on rehabilitation.

That will help seniors who "take no joy in staying in hospitals" to go home sooner to be with their families, Mr Gan said.

A rooftop garden, for instance, will have rehabilitation facilities to develop patients' abilities in daily activities like gardening, or getting in and out of a car.

And in a first for such hospitals, OCH will have a dialysis facility, with 20 to 30 spots, so kidney failure patients need not occupy acute-care beds for dialysis.

To further link up services, HCA Hospice Care will have home hospice offices and a day hospice there.

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