

FROM C1

BUS SHELTER ‘NOT A SILVER BULLET’

The concept of therapeutic bus shelters is not new. It has been implemented for patients with dementia in hospitals and nursing homes abroad.

For example, two bus stops at Wokingham Hospital in England serve as a comforting reference point for its dementia patients.

Studies have shown that creating familiar landmarks helps reduce agitation and anxiety in patients.

But an article published by the Israel Journal of Health Policy Research in 2019 showed that while the goal was to reduce the number of dementia patients trying to escape from nursing homes, the bus stops could also increase their frustration and the feeling of being deceived.

Dr Sarah Chan, a Chan Heng Chee Research Fellow at SUTD’s Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, says the use of a landmark like a bus shelter in a dementia ward serves as a navigational aid.

However, the environmental psychologist emphasises that a bus shelter or other familiar landmarks should be more than just a symbolic feature.

She says: “A fake bus shelter alone is not a silver bullet. Its value lies in how it is used, for example, by serving as a safe space for reminiscence therapy or social interactions.”

BUS SHELTER AND BUS DECALS AT KTPH

KTPH introduced a bus shelter decal and a bus decal on the walls of its acute geriatric ward in August 2024.

Safe space for social interactions and reminiscing



KHOO TECK PUAT HOSPITAL

The walls of Khoo Teck Puat Hospital’s acute geriatric ward are adorned with decals depicting a bus and a bus shelter. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

KTPH’s deputy director of nursing, Madam Yip Pok Ling, who conceived the idea in 2023, says the imagery evokes a sense of normality and connection to the outside world.

Nurses often engage patients with dementia by pretending to wait for a bus at the decal, says Ms Siti Nur Aisyah Ibrahim, senior staff nurse at KTPH.

“As they wait, nurses may chat with the patients about where they might be going, which can spark cherished memories and distract them from distressing thoughts,” she adds.

For example, one patient, who frequently became agitated, calmed down when “waiting” for a bus.

She excitedly talked about past trips, allowing caregivers to redirect her thoughts more easily.

KTPH also introduced a coffee shop setting in its geriatric outpatient clinic in 2019.

Ms Loh Sook Gin, assistant nurse clinician at KTPH, says the former head of the geriatric department observed that the clinical environment was not conducive to fostering communication and bonding between frail patients and their families.

A setting like this also puts patients at ease.

For instance, a patient who was reluctant to attend check-ups began looking forward to appointments, referring to them as “going for kopi with friends.”

“Coffee shops are a quintessential part of Singapore life where thoughts are shared and food provided in a relaxed manner. Now, they have the opportunity to spend time together in such a setting while waiting for medical assessments and appointments,” she adds.

amritak@sph.com.sg



ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL

A long corridor in Alexandra Hospital’s geriatric medicine ward is lined with wallpaper depicting old shophouses. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE



ST ANDREW'S NURSING HOME

Staff helping senior residents at St Andrew’s Nursing Home in Taman Jurong shop for items at a makeshift provision shop. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG



JURONG COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Jurong Community Hospital introduced a living room environment in its dementia ward. PHOTO: JURONG COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

How other hospitals and a nursing home are helping senior patients thrive

Amrita Kaur

To create a relaxed environment for elderly patients, Alexandra Hospital (AH) incorporated nostalgic fixtures and designs in

its geriatric medicine ward in 2018.

Named Rasa Sayang, which means Feeling of Love, the ward houses patients aged 65 and above who have one or more geriatric health conditions, including dementia, delirium and functional decline.

A key feature of the ward is an older version of a bus shelter set against a wall decorated with a decal of Heap Seng Leong, a traditional coffee shop that has been operating since the 1970s.

This is complemented by a kopitiam-style seating area, where patients, staff and caregivers can interact and reminisce together.

A long corridor in the ward is also lined with wallpaper depicting old

shophouses.

Dr Arthi Premkumar, associate consultant at AH’s healthy ageing programme, says the vintage-themed interior encourages patients to explore as part of physiotherapy sessions.

The ward also houses patients with delirium, who often experience confusion and a disrupted sense of time, leading them to sleep during the day and remain active at night.

To regulate their sleep patterns, ceiling panels that mimic the sky can be adjusted to indicate day or night.

At St Andrew’s Nursing Home in Taman Jurong, nostalgic wall decals and fixtures evoke memories of a

bygone era.

They are catered to residents living with dementia, psychiatric conditions and other health conditions.

The nursing home features displays like a Peranakan kueh shop, post office, vintage music store and a flower shop reminiscent of those in Little India.

Dr Daniel Lee, cluster chief executive at St Andrew’s Nursing Home, says these installations help residents feel connected to their past and encourage engagement with their surroundings.

The activity room, for instance, mimics an old HDB void deck, with a provision shop and a barber.

Upon leaving the room, seniors

can take a leisurely walk down a 1970s “street” lined with shops.

“Residents who may otherwise be withdrawn often become more animated when they see a familiar shop or cultural reference that resonates with their experiences,” says Dr Lee.

Jurong Community Hospital (JCH) also introduced a “living room” in its dementia ward.

Set up in 2021, the space is adorned with antique items like vintage movie posters, analogue phones and old soft drink bottles.

Adjunct Assistant Professor Kelvin Koh, medical director at JCH, says the area helps to create a home-like environment and can reduce anxiety and confusion.

Patients are able to recall experiences and share their knowledge about the nostalgic items, such as their names, usage and how frequently they were used, adds Ms Veronica Lau, an occupational therapist at JCH.

“Some of these memories are fond ones, and I have witnessed patients smiling as they point to these items, which is rare for some of them,” she adds.

SCAN TO WATCH

Why are there bus stops in hospital wards? str.sg/vid-bus26



specialist	specialist	TCM
<p>Dr GOH EYE SPECIALIST A/Prof Goh Kong Yong Cataracts, Lasers, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, Retinal Disorders, Vision Loss, Double Vision, Floaters, Child Myopia, Blur Vision, Dry Eyes, Neuro-Ophthalmology</p> <p>Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital #07-37, 38, Irrawaddy Road Singapore 329563 • Tel: 6684 4140 / 9644 4830 (24hr)</p>	<p>NEUROSPINE AND PAIN CENTER SINGAPORE Singapore Spine Specialist</p> <p>A Specialist Center for the treatment of Back Pain, Neck Pain, Arm and Leg Pain related to the Spine, with Digital Spine Assessments and treatments with Medications, keyhole spine microsurgery, Endoscopy and Lasers including No Surgery day procedures.</p> <p>15-03 Mt Elizabeth Medical Center • WhatsApp: 9725 5373 Website: https://SingaporeSpine.org • E-Mail: brainspinesg@gmail.com</p>	<p>YU YING TCM & ACUPUNCTURE CLINIC Treatment in TCM Gastroenterology for Acid Reflux, Diarrhoea, Vomiting, Stomach Pain, Fecal incontinence, Constipation and other Digestive System Disease.</p> <p>#B1-28 Paya Lebar Square Singapore 409051 (Paya Lebar MRT Exit A/B) Tel: 6980 5730 • Website: www.yuyingtcm.com</p>
<p>APPLE EYE CENTRE Dr Yeo Kim Teck Cataract, Glaucoma, Retinal Surgery, Diabetic Eye Screening and Laser, Myopia Management, General Eye Screening and Treatment. Dr Yang Morgan (Tue & Thu pm) Adult / Children Tearing & Droopy lids, Eyebags, Double Eyelids, Cosmetic eyelid surgery.</p> <p>290 Orchard Road, #11-01, The Paragon Medical Centre Tel: +65 6235 7000 / +65 8333 1101 (WhatsApp)</p>	<p>SPECIALIST PAIN INTERNATIONAL CLINIC Dr Nicholas Chua Hai Liang, MBBS, MMed, Ph.D Special interests in complex spine pain, headaches, facial pain, nerve pain and severe cancer pain.</p> <p>Mount Elizabeth Novena Specialist Medical Centre 38 Irrawaddy Road, #09-43, Singapore 329563 Tel: (65) 6339 1880/ 8511 2119</p>	<p>Yueqi Chinese Medical & Acupuncture Hall Treatment in Arthritis, Rheumatism, Sprain, Backache & Sciatica, Knee Pain, Migraine, High Blood Pressure, Diabetic, Gastritis, Nephritis, Stroke, Shingles, Hemorrhoids etc.</p> <p>Blk 84 Bedok North Ave 4, #01-23 S'pore 460084 Tel: 6446 2392 • Website: yueqitcm.com.sg</p>
<p>ANGEL EYE & CATARACT CENTRE Dr Allan Fong, BBM, PBM, MBBS (S'pore), MMed (Ophth), FRCS (Edinburgh), MRCOphth (London), FAMS Senior Consultant Eye Surgeon, with Special Interests in Cataract Surgery (FLACS), LASIK & Refractive Surgery, Pterygium, Dry Eye Syndrome, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, AMD, Myopia Control and General Ophthalmology</p> <p>Royal Square Medical Centre @Novena • 101 Irrawaddy Rd, #21-07, S329565 Tel: 6514 3338 • WhatsApp: 9615 0398 • Website: www.angeleye.com.sg</p>	<p>SIOW NEUROLOGY HEADACHE & PAIN CENTRE Neurology and Pain Specialist Treatment for Headaches and Chronic Pain Disorders (Migraine, Tension Headache, Neck Pain, Fibromyalgia, Neuropathic and Myofascial Pain) Also for Strokes, Parkinson's Disease, Dementia, Epilepsy, Sleep Disorders, Muscle & Nerve Disorders.</p> <p>Mount Alvernia Hospital, Medical Centre Blk. D, #08-59 820 Thomson Road, Singapore 574623, Tel: 6254 5289</p>	<p>Call 6289 8822 or e-mail notices@sph.com.sg to book your AGM & EGM, Auction & Tender, Financial Statement, IPO, Merger & Acquisition or Move to Mainboard notices.</p> <p>NOTICES</p>