

Speech by Mr Lim Boon Heng, Minister for Prime Minister's Office at the Official Opening Ceremony of Pacific Healthcare Nursing Home II on 21st January 2009 at 11:20am

Dr William Chong, Executive Director & CEO, Pacific Healthcare Holdings,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

I am delighted to join you here for the opening of the Pacific Healthcare Nursing Home II. Singapore's population is ageing rapidly. The first of our baby boomers will reach 65 years old by 2012. They will form the largest aged population that we will experience, and we have to prepare ourselves for this reality.

Supporting Care in the Community

Among the areas that we need to prepare for, one of them must be - who will care for us when we are old? In a survey that was released recently, close to seven out of every ten baby boomers indicated that they expected either their spouse or their children to support them in their old age. Emotional support and physical care were the top forms of support the baby boomers expected.

Care for the elderly by the family within the community is the most cost effective option. Fortunately, international experts, who visited Singapore just last week, observed that our housing infrastructure was ideally suited to help Singaporeans age in place. Ninety percent of us own our own homes. In an ageing population, community-based support services should be developed to facilitate this ageing in place and support family caregivers. The international experts advised us to develop support services. We also need to ensure that Singaporeans can afford to pay for these services.

Care in Nursing Homes

There will be those who need more intensive care and support than their caregivers can provide. Nursing homes thus have an important place in our spectrum of health and long-term care services. This truth is probably not lost to baby boomers. The same survey revealed that one in ten baby boomers did not mind staying in a nursing home.

Pacific Healthcare's second nursing home can help to meet the demand for nursing home placements. I understand that much thought has been put in to the design of this home, including a garden and a specially designed rehab area for residents.

I hope that the nursing home can also serve as a good option for family members to obtain short-term respite from their caregiving duties. Traditionally, we see nursing homes as institutions. But increasingly, some nursing homes are providing relevant services such as home nursing, daycare, and short-term stays.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say this, we must first recognise that most of us desire to live in the community for as long as possible. However, we cannot deny that some elderly will become bedridden or so sick that the services of a nursing home are needed. At this point, the elderly and their families would need to be assuaged that the home is well-equipped and have trained professional staff to provide the best possible care for their residents. I am confident that this nursing home shares this mission.

With this, I wish Pacific Healthcare the very best in this and its other endeavours.

Thank you.