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MOH to ramp up use of apps, robotics to improve home care

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Gan Kim Yong, health minister, Singapore recently announced that by the end of the year, all Singaporeans can use a new app to call for a nurse and order home care supplies.

The application, called Health MarketPlace, was one of several technology-driven initiatives mentioned by Gan Kim in his speech at the annual National Health IT Summit held at the Singapore Expo recently.

Now in its pilot phase, Health MarketPlace will be scaled up by the end of the year. Singapore General Hospital (SGH) and KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) are among the healthcare providers currently participating in the pilot.

The Health Marketplace is just one of the many projects the Ministry of Health (MOH) will be ramping up under its Health IT Master Plan.

With funding support from the National Robotics Programme, the Health Ministry will support the trial use of robotics in healthcare, Gan Kim added.

"We intend to develop prototypes of smart wards integrated with smart logistics for what we hope will be hospitals of the future. In line with the shift beyond hospitals to the community, we will also look into robotics-assisted home care. As a whole, the use of the vital signs monitoring platform can enable more regular monitoring, improve patient management and reduce hospital visits and re-admissions," he said.

In his speech, Gan also renewed calls for private healthcare providers to digitalise their records to join the National Electronic Health Record (NEHR). At present, more than 760,000 patient record searches are made monthly, he said, adding that there was a need "to go further and faster".

"There is immense potential in harnessing health data for research, more effective policy and programme development, better-targeted care interventions and treatments, more productive practices and expanded outreach," he said.