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Singapore creates virtual wards for vulnerable COVID-19 patient groups

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NUHS creates a COVID-19 virtual ward to assist patients recovering under the home programme and to stabilise the healthcare monitoring system



Singapore's National University Health System (NUHS) has created a 'COVID-19 Virtual Ward' aiming to assist COVID-19 patients whose conditions are stable enough and are recovering at the Home Programme. The Virtual Ward patients require closer monitoring and more intensive medical care than those on the Singapore Ministry of Health (MOH) Home Recovery Programme. The MOH Home Recovery Programme is for vaccinated, younger individuals who have no medical conditions.

A care team comprising dedicated NUHS doctors and nurses will monitor the patients remotely and are responsible for all medical needs during the patient's period of isolation. NUHS medical staff or personnel from affiliated third-party vendors may also visit patients at home to provide the necessary medical treatment. If the condition worsens, the patient will be transferred to the hospital.

The COVID-19 Virtual Ward is an alternative to hospitalisation or community treatment facility for patients who do not qualify for the MOH Home Recovery Programme due to the following reasons –

- Do not meet the age cut-off
- Have existing medical conditions such as heart, lung, liver, neurological diseases, cancer;
- Are on medications that suppress the immune system
- Are unvaccinated due to the above reasons

The care team conducts regular teleconsultations to monitor the patient's symptoms, condition and keeps a check on the patient's oxygen levels. The OneNUHS app is another initiative to promote this shift to healthcare in the community.

This healthcare-at-home approach frees up beds in hospitals and could be part of key strategies for future pandemics. The virtual wards can boost the work of healthcare staff further revolutionizing the healthcare infrastructure.