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Singapore sets up Sustainable Medicine Design Lab

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Marks the biggest collaboration to date between the healthcare sector and an arts institution



The National University Hospital (NUH) and LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore (LASALLE) have established a first-of-its-kind Sustainable Medicine Design Lab, bringing together clinicians, designers and students to develop design interventions for more sustainable healthcare systems.

The programme begins with a three-month internship where students familarise themselves with the healthcare environment, followed by nine months of intensive fieldwork. During this time, students observe medical procedures and facilitate co-design sessions with diverse groups.

The one-year mentorship engaged a wide array of participants: patients and caregivers; clinical staff such as doctors, nurses, and pharmacists; and essential operations personnel including management, cleaners, and the logistics teams responsible for sterilising surgical equipment.

Rooted in deep design anthropology, the students' work unpack highly complex issues by applying critical system thinking, direct observation, and hands-on practice. Together, the projects address sustainability across clinical workflows, infrastructure, patient experience and system behaviour. Notably, several of these projects are already under review for real-world implementation.

The projects include:

- **Redesigning the Cataract Operating Theatre**
- **Rethinking the Procedure Tray**
- **Reducing Pharmaceutical Waste**
- **Humanising the Clinic**
- **Patient Eye Health Literacy**
- **Addressing Chronic Misalignment**

The lab marks a shift towards design-led innovation grounded in real clinical environments, where strategies and interventions solutions are conceived by students and co-developed with diverse stakeholders on the ground for direct applicability to healthcare operations. It marks the biggest collaboration to date between the healthcare sector and an arts institution in terms of the scale and depth of research.