

# Raffles Healthnews

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# RMG Recounts 2020





# Enhanced Subsidies

## for Nationally Recommended Vaccinations






From 1 November 2020, Singaporean children and adults will benefit from subsidies for recommended vaccinations under the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS) and National Adult Immunisation Programme (NAIS).

Under this scheme, eligible Singaporeans will pay the following rates if they take their vaccinations at CHAS GP clinics.



**Scan to find out more**

### Subsidy Table

				
Singaporean Children	Pioneer Generation	Merdeka Generation	CHAS Blue & Orange	CHAS Green / Other Singaporean Adults
<b>Enhanced subsidies of between \$35 and \$125</b> (per vaccination dose)				
<b>Balance payment per vaccination dose</b>				
\$0	\$9 to \$16	\$18 to \$31	\$35 to \$63	

**Prior to taking the vaccination, please consult your Raffles doctor to find out which vaccinations are recommended, and if you are suitable**

Prices listed are nett rates. Eligibility criteria for subsidies and vaccinations, and terms and conditions apply.



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are CHAS clinics

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# Hello Readers!



The year 2020, or better known as the COVID year, has left as swiftly as it came, leaving a trail of destruction in its path. From COVID deaths to job losses and shut down of century-old businesses, this will no doubt go down as one of the worst years in history.

As bad as it had been, we must also remember the good. 2020 was the year that the world came together as one and fought one common enemy like no other times. We saw the best of people around the world, who came forward and helped those in need most selflessly. There were also countless true-life tales of medical workers who sacrificed time with loved ones, or even their own lives, so as to serve those in need. Just among us at Raffles, I have witnessed first-hand how some of my colleagues braved all uncertainties and stepped up to volunteer for assignments others might deem too risky. Their motivation is admirable and is always simply because they are answering the call of duty.

For others, you might have shared your professional know-how or contributed to the fight with your time or money. If anything, the worst year of all times has also taught us humility and the importance of togetherness. For me, the message from 2020 is ultimately about staying single-minded as ONE to brave this pandemic, and together, we will all emerge stronger.

With this positivity in view, I hope all of us can find that silver lining in a year we have all eagerly put behind us. Because the effects of COVID-19 are longer-lasting than we expected, it is of utmost importance that we do not let our guards down. Even as vaccines start rolling out around the world, each one of us should still do what we can to be socially responsible and practise safety measures such as limiting social gatherings, wearing masks and taking the vaccine when available. It is only with this vaccine that we could hope for greater herd immunity to completely put COVID-19 behind us.

With this, I want to applaud everyone for doing what was right in 2020 so that healthcare professionals like myself could do more for those in need. Let us continue to persevere, stay safe and healthy, and look forward to a better year in 2021.

## Dr Hoo Kai Meng

Deputy Medical Director  
Raffles Medical

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Video Consult a Raffles Doctor 24/7



Visit us @ [rafflesmedicalgroup.com](https://www.rafflesmedicalgroup.com)

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# New Docs on the Block



## Dr David Ng

Specialist in Paediatric Medicine  
Consultant, Raffles Children's Centre

Dr Ng has a sub-specialty interest in paediatric allergy. His practice includes all areas of general ambulatory paediatrics including a wide range of common childhood conditions like acute infections, growth and developmental concerns.

He has managed a variety of patients with atopic diseases, including food and drug allergies, allergic rhinitis, asthma and atopic dermatitis. Dr Ng is also experienced in paediatric developmental assessment and vaccinations.



## Dr Amy Wang

Specialist in Paediatric Medicine  
Consultant, Raffles Children's Centre

Dr Wang's clinical interests are in developmental assessment and vaccinations.

Her practice includes all areas of general ambulatory paediatrics, and a wide range of common childhood conditions like acute infections, growth and developmental concerns.







### Dr Isaac Liu

Specialist in Paediatric Medicine  
Consultant, Raffles Children's Centre

Besides paediatric medicine, Dr Liu also specialises in paediatric nephrology. His clinical interests include urinary tract infection, urinary abnormalities (blood and/or protein), kidney inflammation, high blood pressure, genetic kidney diseases including prenatal and foetal abnormalities, and chronic kidney disease.

He treats infants and children suffering from common childhood ailments, and performs developmental assessment and vaccinations.



### Dr Sarah Lu

Specialist in General Surgery  
Consultant, Raffles Surgery Centre

Dr Lu specialises in breast cancer care and surgery. She completed her fellowship training in National Cancer Centre (Seoul) and L'Institut du Sein (Paris) in the areas of breast conservation and oncoplastic surgery to complement her clinical interest in breast cancer care and surgery.

She is actively involved in the medical education space in Singapore and the region as faculty in the areas of selection, simulation and communication.



### Dr Woo Shu Jeng

Specialist in Gastroenterology  
Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine Centre

Dr Woo's areas of speciality are in general gastroenterology and clinical hepatology with a special interest in managing complications of liver cirrhosis. He specialises in treating ascites and spontaneous bacterial peritonitis, varices and bleeding complications, liver cancer, autoimmune liver and bile duct conditions, as well as chronic viral Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

Apart from his clinical practice, Dr Woo is actively involved in teaching medical students, and he is appointed as a Clinical Lecturer at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, NUS and DUKE-NUS Medical School.



### Dr Anuradha Negi

Specialist in Endocrinology  
Consultant, Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre

Dr Negi's areas of clinical interest include diabetes, thyroid and osteoporosis, and rarer endocrine disorders.

Prior to joining Raffles Hospital, she was extensively involved in general endocrinology and osteoporosis service, and received awards for excellence in clinical services.

In 2019, Dr Negi completed her training in the management of obesity and metabolic disorders and was actively involved in clinical research in obesity disorders.



### Dr Christopher Leo

Specialist in Renal Medicine  
Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine Centre

Dr Leo's areas of clinical interest include Interventional nephrology, glomerulonephritis, chronic kidney disease, haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis.

His clinical proficiency encompasses caring for patients on haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis, as well as patients with glomerulonephritis and other acute or chronic kidney diseases. Dr Leo is also skilled in performing percutaneous renal biopsies in addition to various dialysis access procedures, including tunneled dialysis catheters, peritoneal dialysis catheters and endovascular interventions for arteriovenous fistula / graft.



### Dr Roy Kan

Specialist in Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine

Dr Kan holds dual specialist accreditations in anaesthesiology and intensive care medicine from the Ministry of Health (MOH), Singapore.

He established the National Healthcare Group Anaesthesiology residency programme as its first Programme Director from 2009 to 2016.

In 2018, Dr Kan won an Asian Hospital Management award for operational excellence.



### Dr Gowri Karunakarar

Specialist in Paediatric Medicine  
Consultant, Raffles Juniors

Dr Gowri's clinical interests are in general paediatrics and adolescent medicine.

Her practice includes all areas of general ambulatory paediatrics ranging from common childhood conditions like acute infections, growth and developmental concerns to adolescent care.

She is practising at the newly opened Raffles Juniors clinic located at Waterway Point.

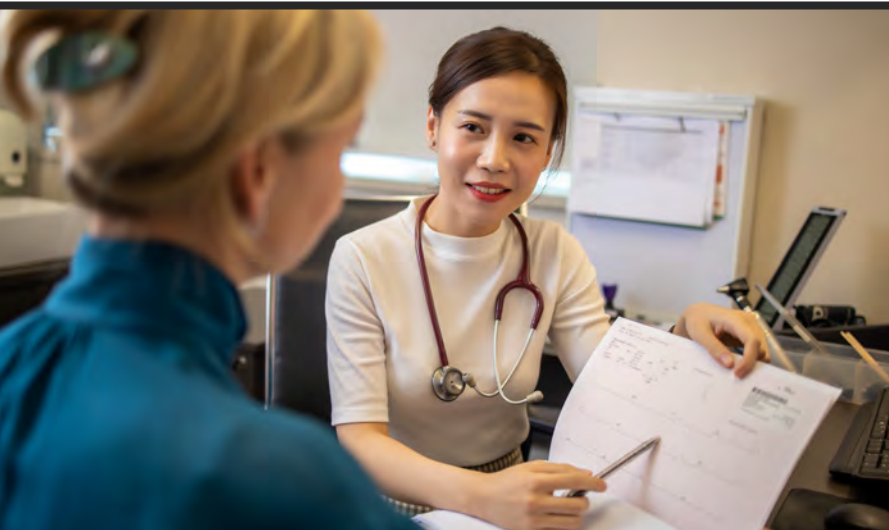


### Dr Shaun Ho

Specialist in Radiation Oncology  
Consultant, Raffles Cancer Centre

Dr Ho has clinical interests in radiosurgery, stereotactic ablative body radiotherapy and palliative radiotherapy.

His scope of practice is in the use of radiotherapy to treat a variety of cancer patients for both cure and palliation. He is also proficient in the use of advanced radiotherapy techniques such as stereotactic radiosurgery, stereotactic ablative body radiotherapy and volumetric modulated arc therapy to improve patient outcomes and minimise side effects of treatment.



## Serving Your Healthcare Needs in Katong & Joo Chiat

Raffles Medical is now open at Joo Chiat! Located conveniently in the heart of Katong / Joo Chiat area, the clinic offers an accessible, cosy and private environment for our patients!

**Services include:**

- Treatment of acute and chronic conditions
- Company, insurance and statutory checkups
- Health screening
- Vaccinations
- Minor surgery
- Pilot CASA medicals

## RafflesMedicalGroup



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# Raffles Launches First Seamless App- based Booking for COVID-19 PCR Tests

On 12 November 2020, Raffles Medical Group launched Singapore's first seamless app-based booking, payment, and receipt of COVID-19 polymerases chain reaction (PCR) test on the Raffles Connect app.

This feature offers greater convenience for people who require the test by allowing appointment booking for the test at any of Raffles Medical's 36 clinics island-wide.

For more information, please visit:  
[rafflesmedicalgroup.com/covid-19-test](https://rafflesmedicalgroup.com/covid-19-test)



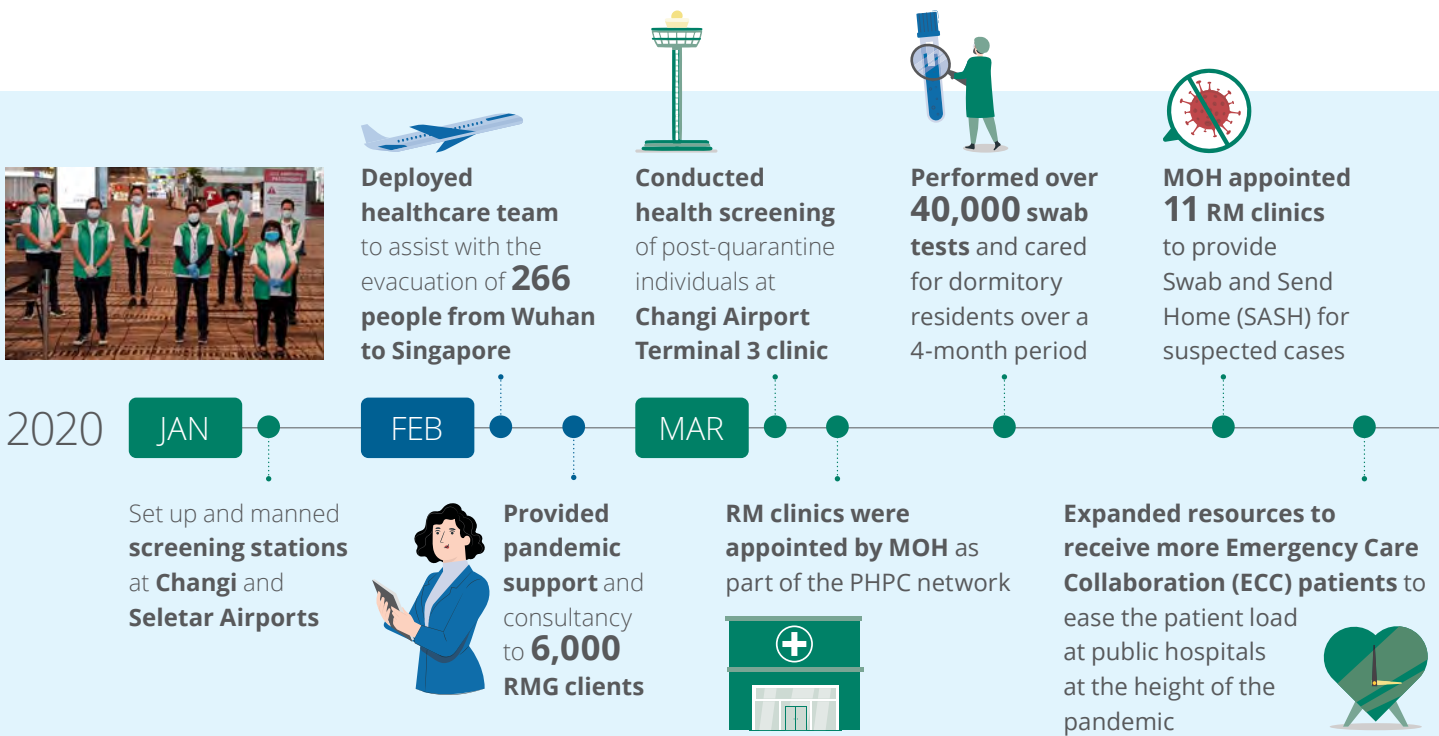
# RMG Recounts 2020

Tired but passionate doctors, nurses, healthcare workers rushing around in their PPEs and goggles to see to pandemic patients. Closed air and sea borders with heightened security and make-shift temperature screening stations lined up at airports and seaports. Dead quiet streets of Times Square in New York and cancelled fireworks of River Thames in London were what greeted the countdown to the new year. These are mental images that will stay with us for as long as the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic persist. While the world continues to reel under the destructive pressure of the virus, private healthcare providers like Raffles Medical Group (RMG) has been dedicated and relentlessly standing by the country, as Singapore steps up and picks up pace to gradually re-open our borders and rebuild our economy.

At the threshold of 2021, we summed up the year's activities as our way of welcoming a better and brighter new year. Here's a recap of major milestones and activities.

By Cindy Gui





## RMG led the COVID-19 fight

at Singapore's air and sea borders, community care and recovery facilities, at the dormitories, in our clinics, and at Corporate and public events

**2,000** RMG employees in **14** cities answered the call to serve the community

**600,000** COVID-19 tests were conducted by RMG in 2020

**2,000** employees and RMG partners were trained to be deployed to serve at the frontlines of infection control.

### A Rude Awakening

As abruptly as the virus had first descended onto Singapore and disrupted the Lunar New Year celebrations in late January 2020, the team at Raffles had very deftly responded and deployed healthcare workers to set up and man screening stations at Changi and Seletar airports to screen inbound and outbound travellers and ensure that the virus was kept out of Singapore.

Said Dr Chng Shih Kiat, Medical Director of Raffles Medical, "Although there were a lot of unknowns about the virus at that point and how the situation might evolve, as medical professionals who have been through the SARS saga, we knew we were up against something really malicious and it was absolutely critical that we responded quickly. Instantly, we worked with the authorities to do our utmost to identify cases in the community through screening stations at the air borders and segregated them before the spread escalated. We have been an integral contributor to Singapore's fight against COVID-19 because we have applied what we have learnt from the SARS experience and through the years, have ensured our people are trained and guarded even during pre-pandemic times."

In early February when Wuhan city in China was identified as the epicenter of the pandemic, we deployed a healthcare team who braved all uncertainties to assist with the evacuation of over 260 Singaporeans who returned home safely on a chartered flight.

By late February, when it was clear a pandemic was looming in the near horizon, we provided pandemic support and consultancy to our 6,000 clients so that they could continue with their business operations with the least disruptions possible, and adequate protection for their employees. In March, as community cases started to increase exponentially in Singapore, Raffles Hospital dedicated more resources to take in more Emergency Care Collaboration (ECC)\* patients who were suffering from acute or emergency conditions, so as to ease the patient load on our public hospitals.

\*Since 2015, RMG has been appointed by MOH through the ECC initiative as the only private hospital in Singapore to take in emergency cases from SCDF ambulances.



**Appointed by MOH as the designated healthcare provider** for community care / recovery facilities at **Changi Exhibition Centre** and **Marina Bay Cruise Centre**



**Supported airport screening and testing** for all the special business travel lanes in Singapore



APR



**Deployed 2 doctors and 20 nurses** to support triage and teleconsultation for residents of the **Changi East Terminal 5 Dormitory**

MAY

**Commenced Repatriation screening and fit-to-fly services**



JUN

**Offered pre-departure tests at 5 RM clinics**



AUG

**Conducted Routine Rostered Testing PCR tests** for companies as part of Singapore's re-opening

### To Our Patients, Our Best

We deployed teams of doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants to support the swabbing and caring of residents at foreign worker dormitories at the height of the pandemic. When resources were scarce, our dentists, dental nurses and assistants volunteered to be trained to support the healthcare needs of these residents. Over a period of four months, RMG had performed over 40,000 swab tests for these residents.

To ensure the public is well cared for, Ministry of Health (MOH) also appointed 11 of Raffles Medical (RM) clinics as part of Singapore's Public Health Preparedness Clinic (PHPC) network. This means Singaporeans diagnosed with respiratory infections were provided with government subsidised treatment and medications during the pandemic. These clinics could also provide Swab and Send Home (SASH) services for suspected COVID-19 cases. By the end of the year, MOH had expanded this offering to 36 RM clinics island-wide.

### Providers of Essential Lockdown Support

As community cases sustained, Singapore went into lockdown in April. Community Care and Recovery Facilities

(CCF & CRF) at various locations all over Singapore were set up to manage the stark increase in cases for residents at the foreign workers' dormitories. RMG answered the call as the designated healthcare provider for the CCF and CRF at Changi Exhibition Centre and Marina Bay Cruise Centre as appointed by MOH, where we deployed both healthcare personnel as well as technology to see to the needs of the residents in a safe and efficient manner. To prevent cross-infection, residents sought healthcare advice from RMG doctors through teleconsultation. This service later extended to cover the CCF and CRF at the Singapore EXPO and MAX Atria. RMG also deployed two doctors and 20 nurses to provide triaging and teleconsultation services to residents of the Changi East Terminal 5 Dormitory.

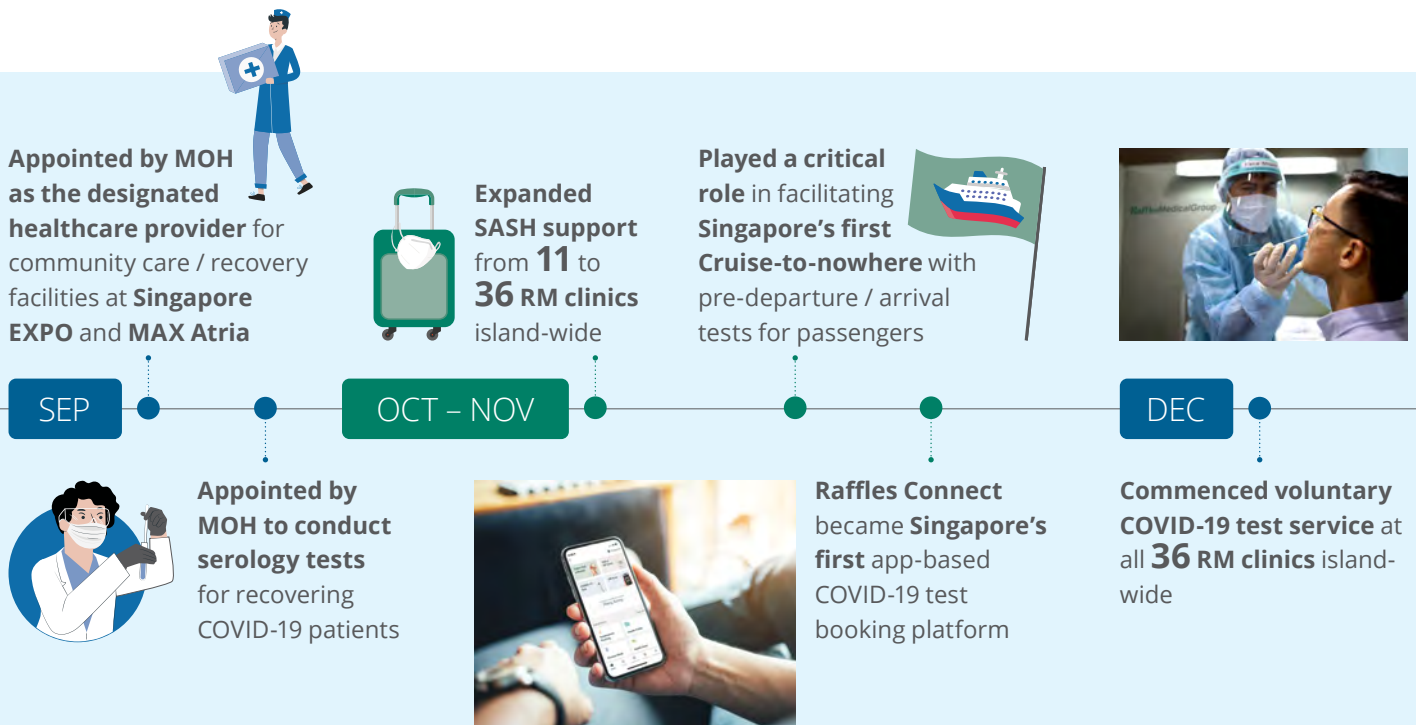
### Standing-by to Restart Singapore

As the Circuit Breaker neared its end in June, Singapore had by then allowed for limited essential travelling. To facilitate these travels that were essential for gradual economic recovery, five of RM clinics were the first in Singapore to be appointed by MOH to provide pre-departure testing for essential business travellers. The service included repatriation screening and fit-to-fly

certification services. We also set up new screening stations at Singapore's five airport terminals for passengers coming into Singapore on special business travel lanes. Corporate clients that could resume businesses also received Routine Rostered Testing PCR tests from RM to get the all-clear for their workers to commence work while we continued to guide them in infection control and business continuity measures for their employees.

As Singapore prepared to re-start travel and reopen borders, it became essential for approved travellers to have enhanced access to swab tests. RMG became Singapore's first to launch a seamless app-based booking where appointment, payment and receipt of COVID-19 PCR tests are all on one platform via Raffles Connect.

By late October, hopes of restricted public events started to make the news. RMG was proud to have supported the very first large-scale event since the Circuit Breaker with the international live sporting event gathering for a Mixed Martial Arts match. Before 250 excited spectators could attend the match, swabs were conducted as a safety measure to avoid infection spread.



Then, travel-starved Singaporeans were elated to hear news of the first Cruise-to-nowhere that set sail in early November. RMG was instrumental in bringing these travel dreams to fruition by providing pre-departure and arrival tests at the Marina Bay Cruise Centre for passengers.

Mr Yong Yih Ming, General Manager of Raffles Medical, who has led various key operations since the beginning of the pandemic to the recent projects gearing at the re-opening of the economy, said, "Team Raffles stepped up and participated in all phases of Singapore's fight against COVID-19. When we needed to monitor and prevent importation of the virus COVID-19 through our air borders, we did the surveillance. When we needed to support national evacuation initiatives at Wuhan, we flew there. When our migrant workers and their dormitories needed testing and medical care, our team worked tirelessly round-the-clock to cover grounds. When pilot projects like Cruise-to-nowhere and some MICE events had to be tested to re-open the economy, we ensured their successes. When our corporate clients needed business continuity planning, we stepped in. While it was challenging for healthcare professionals,

Raffles rose to all challenges and made every effort count in the fight. With our acquired experiences in 2020, we are definitely well-positioned as strategic partners to fight this COVID-19 war alongside Singapore and support its gradual re-opening in the next phases."

#### A Suitable End to a New Start

By the year's end, we counted 2,000 RMG employees in 14 cities who had answered the call to serve the community, 600,000

COVID-19 tests were performed, and over 6 million people in Singapore (residents and visitors) who had been screened, tested and cared for by RMG since the pandemic started earlier in the year. We have been integral in leading the COVID-19 fight at Singapore's air and sea borders, CCF and CRF, in our clinics, and at corporate and public events, and we will continue to lend our best to Singapore as we fight together as one towards a better year ahead.



^ RMG healthcare workers geared in full PPE at the CCF / CRF site of Changi Exhibition Centre.



# Beware! Dengue Can Be As Deadly As COVID-19!

By Cindy Gui



Back in July 2020, Singapore saw a record-high outbreak of dengue with more than 18,000 cases of infections and 19 deaths reported. Although the situation has somewhat come under control now, there was a time when authorities were concerned that the risk of dengue was overshadowed by COVID-19.

While Singapore continues to do its best to keep the pandemic under control, residents need to be equally mindful of the silent killer – Dengue Fever that is still very much an every-day risk for all of us. Dr Tseng Hsien Cho, Family Physician of Raffles Medical, sheds light on these risks and how you can stay protected.

## Dengue Transmission Explained

Dengue fever is transmitted to humans via the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected after it takes a blood meal from a dengue-infected person. When a person is bitten by an infective mosquito, they may develop symptoms after an incubation period of four to seven days.

The dengue virus is characterised by high fever, rash, muscle and joint pains. Patients who are already infected with the dengue virus can transmit the infection for four to five days via *Aedes* mosquitoes after their first symptoms appear.

Apart from the dengue virus, the *Aedes aegypti* also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika infections. It is a highly domesticated mosquito that lives in close association with humans and prefers to lay its eggs in water containers commonly found in and around homes.

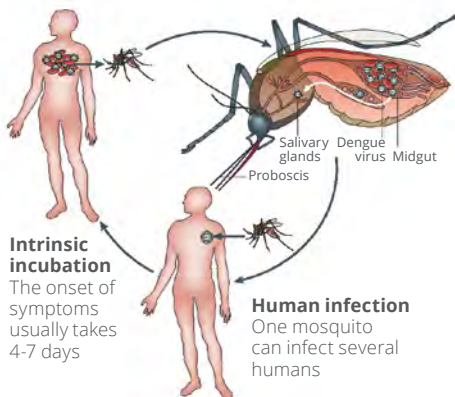


**Mosquito infection**

Mosquito takes a blood meal from a person with acute dengue

**Extrinsic incubation**

Virus infects the midgut and eventually travels to the salivary glands (usually 8-10 days)

**Intrinsic incubation**

The onset of symptoms usually takes 4-7 days

**Human infection**

One mosquito can infect several humans

There are four distinct, but closely related strains (serotypes) of the virus that cause dengue (DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3 and DEN-4). They are all present in Singapore.

**Are You at Higher Risk?**

Most dengue infections occur in pre-adolescents and young adults. Local studies done recently have found that in individuals 40 years old and above, more than 50 per cent tested positive for previous dengue infection.

Younger children and people who have not had the infection before tended to experience milder symptoms than older children and adult. People with weakened immune systems, as well as those with a second dengue infection are believed to be at greater risk of developing severe dengue infection.

**Common Symptoms of Dengue Infection**

- Sudden onset of fever for two to seven days
- Severe headache with pain behind the eyes
- Joint and muscle pain
- Skin rashes
- Nausea and vomiting
- Mild bleeding (e.g. nose or gum bleed, or easy bruising of the skin)

Symptoms usually appear four to seven days after being bitten (ranges from three to 14 days). These symptoms can

be very similar to other illnesses that cause fever, aches and pains, or a rash. Up to 75 per cent of dengue infections do not present with symptoms.

**What is Severe Dengue?**

A minority of patients develop dengue haemorrhagic fever / severe dengue infection with symptoms starting three to seven days after the first sign of illness (after fever breaks). Some warning symptoms to look out for include:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Persistent vomiting and dizziness
- Signs of bleeding (eg. gums, nose, urine and stool)
- Bleeding under the skin that might look like bruising
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Cold or clammy skin
- Irritability or restlessness
- No urine output for four to six hours

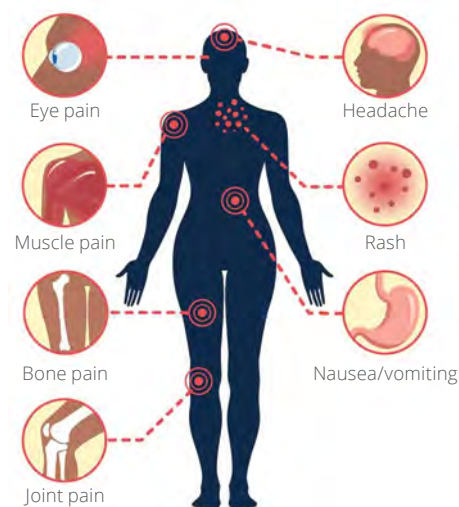
Persons with these symptoms should immediately seek treatment at the emergency department.

**Wipe Out Dengue Infection Today!****#1 - Dengue Vaccine (aka Dengvaxia)**

In 2016, the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) approved a dengue vaccine for persons aged 12 to 45 years old. The vaccine is given in three doses over the course of 12 months. It is recommended only for individuals with documented past dengue infection, either through a diagnostic test or by a documented medical history of past dengue illness. It has shown to be moderately effective in protecting against symptomatic dengue caused by all four dengue viral strains, and also in reducing the incidence of severe dengue disease and hospital admissions in persons previously infected. Please contact your preferred Raffles Medical clinic for more enquiries on this vaccine.

**#2 - Stop Aedes Mosquito Breeding**

The Aedes mosquito is easily identifiable by the distinctive black and white stripes on its body. It prefers to breed in clean, stagnant water easily found in homes. You can get rid of the Aedes mosquito by frequently checking and removing stagnant water in your premises.

**Avoid Mosquito Bites**

- *Stay in air-conditioned or well-screened housing*

The mosquitoes that carry the dengue viruses are most active from dawn to dusk, but they can also bite at night.

- *Wear protective clothing*

When you go into mosquito-infested areas, wear light-coloured long-sleeved shirt, long pants, socks and shoes to protect yourself.

- *Use mosquito repellent*

Permethrin can be applied to your clothes, shoes, camping gear and bed netting. You can also buy clothing made with permethrin already in it. For your skin, use a repellent containing at least 10 per cent concentration of DEET.

- *Eliminate mosquito habitats*

Mosquitoes that carry the dengue virus typically live in and around houses. They breed in standing water that is collected in items such as flowerpots / trays. You can eliminate habitats where they commonly lay their eggs. At least once a week, empty and clean containers that hold standing water, such as planting containers, animal dishes and flower vases. Keep standing water containers covered between cleanings.

# Vaccinations for Adults

By Dr Hoo Kai Meng

Vaccines have greatly reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed infants, children and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause these diseases still exist, and you can still get these diseases if you are not vaccinated.



## Reasons for Vaccinations

### Decrease risk for serious diseases

Adults, especially the elderly and those with serious illnesses, are at greater risk of contracting infectious diseases like pneumonia, shingles, and influenza. They may suffer more severe consequences and even death.

### Protect yourself and your loved ones from diseases

Although you may have been vaccinated as a child, the protection from some vaccines can wear off. You may also be at risk for other diseases due to your job, lifestyle, travel or health conditions.

### You can't afford to get sick

You have a busy life and too many responsibilities to risk getting sick. Vaccines can help you stay healthy so you do not miss work. If you can avoid getting sick, you will have more time for your family, friends and hobbies.

Getting recommended vaccines can give you peace of mind. You will have the best possible protection available against a number of serious diseases.

## Vaccines Are Very Safe

- **Vaccines are tested and monitored**

Vaccines go through years of testing before the Health Sciences Authority issues a license for their use.

- **Vaccine side effects are usually mild and go away in a few days**

The most common side effects include soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given. Severe side effects are very rare.

- **Vaccines are one of the safest ways to protect your health**

Talk with your doctor about the vaccines you should safely receive based on your health or other conditions.

- **Vaccines can lower your chance of getting certain diseases**

Vaccines work with your body's natural defences to help you safely develop immunity to diseases. This lowers your chance of getting certain diseases and suffer from their complications.

For instance:

- Hepatitis B vaccine lowers your risk of liver cancer.
- HPV vaccine lowers your risk of cervical cancer.

- Flu vaccine lowers your risk of flu-related heart attacks or other flu-related complications from existing health conditions like diabetes and chronic lung disease.

- Dengue vaccine will reduce the severity of dengue infection, reduce hospital stay and severity of dengue symptoms.

- **Vaccines lower your chance of spreading disease**

- Some people in your family or community may not be able to get certain vaccines due to their age or health condition. They rely on you to help prevent the spread of diseases.

- Infants, older adults and people with weakened immune systems (like those undergoing cancer treatment) are especially vulnerable to infectious diseases. For example, newborn babies are too young to be vaccinated against whooping cough. Unfortunately, whooping cough can be very dangerous or even deadly for them. Pregnant women should get the Tdap vaccine during every pregnancy to help protect their babies from whooping cough. Anyone who is around babies should be up to date with their whooping cough vaccine.



## Types of Vaccines Recommended for Adults

### Hepatitis A

Viral hepatitis A is usually a self-limiting viral hepatitis caused by the hepatovirus that is transmitted via the faecal-oral route as in eating contaminated food. In children, the course is commonly subclinical meaning asymptomatic, but severity increases with age. Furthermore, it has low potential for chronicity and long-term complications. Infection affords lifelong immunity to the virus.

#### *Dosing and frequency*

Two doses given six to 12 months apart.

### Hepatitis B

Viral hepatitis B is the major cause of chronic viral hepatitis. It is transmitted through contaminated blood or serous fluids, sexual transmission, and vertical mother-to-child transmission. Acute hepatitis B can lead to chronic infection in around 5 per cent of patients. Chronic hepatitis B is the identified cause of up to 80 per cent of all hepatocellular carcinoma cases worldwide.

#### *Dosing and frequency*

One dose given one and 6 months apart.



### Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a virus that is transmitted by direct contact (mostly sexual), which infects the skin, leading to the development of skin or genital warts, and cancerous or precancerous mucosal lesions. Of the more than 100 HPV subtypes, 40 subtypes infect the mucosal epithelium. Of these, 16 subtypes are considered high risk or oncogenic, acting as carcinogens that lead to cervical cancer and other anogenital cancers. These include subtypes 16, 18, 31, 33, 35, 39, 45, 51, 52, 56, 58, 59, 68, 69, 73 and 82. The most common ones are subtypes 16 and 18 that account for 50 per cent and 20 per cent of cervical cancer cases worldwide respectively. Initial HPV infection is considered a necessary step in the oncogenesis of cervical cancer.

This vaccine is recommended for all women from nine years through 45 years of age. The tetravalent can be used in boys that prevents anal warts and anogenital cancer.

#### *Types of vaccines available:*

- Bivalent: two serotypes 16 and 18
- Tetravalent: 6, 11, 16 and 18
- 9 valent: 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58

#### *Dosing and frequency*

Children initiated at nine through 14 years old are given two doses 6 to 12 months apart.

For ladies whose first dose is initiated at age 15 years or above, a three dose schedule is used at between two and six months.

### Influenza Vaccine

Human influenza is a highly infectious respiratory viral illness with three types: influenza A, B and C. Influenza A and B are known to cause moderate to severe disease and epidemics, while influenza C causes a mild upper respiratory disease that does not lead to epidemics. The clinical picture of influenza includes fever, chills, headache, malaise, myalgia, anorexia, and respiratory symptoms (such as sore throat, cough and nasal discharge). Elderly patients may also present with confusion.

There are two types of vaccines available – the trivalent (three strains) and quadrivalent vaccine. The World Health Organisation recommends the use of the quadrivalent vaccine. The influenza virus undergoes substantial antigenic changes that lead to the emergence of different strains from year to year. These changes and waning antibody levels lead to a possible lack of efficacy of vaccines for one type of strain against other strains. Thus, the vaccine is updated annually according to the prevalent influenza strains at the time and thus yearly vaccination is recommended.

#### *Dosing and frequency*

Once annually. Safe for use in pregnancy and particularly for adults in the elderly age group.

### Pneumococcal Vaccine

*Streptococcus pneumoniae* can cause invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD), and capsular polysaccharides are the primary basis of its pathogenicity.

IPD can manifest as bacteraemia, meningitis, bacteraemic pneumonia or sinusitis. Invasive disease is most common in children four years old or younger but incidence slowly rises starting age 35 years. Patients aged 65 years and above are at high risk of morbidity and mortality.

The adult pneumococcal vaccines intended to prevent IPD and pneumonia that are available in Singapore are a 23-valent polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23), and a 13-valent conjugate vaccine (PCV13) (Table 13).

#### *Dosing and frequency*

For patients age 65 years and above with no previous vaccinations either with PCV13 or PPSV23.

Start with PCV13 followed by PPSV23 six to 12 months later.

For those with illnesses or have been vaccinated before, please consult with your doctor regarding dosing regimen.

### Shingles

Shingles is a particularly debilitating illness for the elderly. It can cause eye diseases like corneal ulcers and vision loss.

It can also cause pneumonia and encephalitis. Most commonly, it causes severe pain in the elderly that is extremely debilitating.

#### *Dosing and frequency*

Shingrix: 90 per cent effective in preventing shingles. Comprise two doses two to six months apart

Zostavax: reduces risk of shingles in people above 60 years old by 50 per cent. One dose required only.

### Dengue

Dengue, as we all know is an endemic in Singapore. This illness can cause high fever, severe headache and body aches, joint pains, skin rashes, nausea, vomiting, bleeding and even death.

Prior dengue infection will not protect you from future infections. The subsequent infection will increase your risk of dengue haemorrhagic fever or dengue shock.

There is now a vaccine available named Dengaxia. This vaccine has been proven to be clinically safe and has been shown to reduce severity of subsequent dengue by 95.5 per cent, reduce hospitalisation by 81.3 per cent, and reduction in symptoms by 81.9 per cent.

#### *Dosing and frequency*

For patients 12 to 45 years old with evidence of previous infection (documented, verifiable records of positive dengue antibodies or blood test for dengue antibodies).

**Please consult your family physicians or travel clinics for more details on vaccinations.**





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## Benefits of Raffles Health Balance C Plus

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- ✓ Necessary for the growth, development and repair of all body issues. It's involved in many body functions, including formation of collagen, wound healing and the maintenance of cartilage, bones and teeth.
- ✓ Buffered and Timed release – Gentle on the stomach
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# Optimising Your Immunity

## The TCM approach

By Joanna Lee



When it comes to giving your immune system a boost, what comes to mind immediately is to search for a list of superfoods to incorporate into your diet. However, did you know that there is more than one approach to optimise your immunity and protect your health? Physician Tay Jia Yin, Raffles Chinese Medicine, tells us more.

### How does Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) fit into nutrition?

Western nutrition analyses food in terms of its chemical composition, for example the calories, carbohydrates, and vitamins it contains. On the other hand, Chinese medicine focuses on the energetic properties that each food contains.

Every food has a nature and flavour that is associated with our organs. 'Nature' refers to either warming or cooling, and it describes the temperature effect of a food has on the body. 'Flavour' refers to the taste, and it is often described as sour, bitter, sweet, salty or pungent. Chinese dietary therapy utilises these properties as a guide to having a well-balanced meal. A balanced diet is prescribed not only according to illnesses, but also in accordance to a person's body type.

### What are the TCM superfoods?

The term 'superfood' is a contemporary term. Generally, from the TCM viewpoint, one particular food could be good for one person, but may not be so good for another. There is no one-size-fits-all label since the food nature as well



as its flavours have to be taken into consideration. Besides, the properties that each food contains differs from one another and can be helpful to the body at different times.

There are, however, certain foods that stand out with special attributes and they are often consumed to maintain good health. These foods include:

- a) **Ginseng:** strengthens and replenishes *Qi* (vital energy), which is essential to the body, also relieves fatigue and improves immunity.
- b) **Astragalus:** known for its ability to strengthen the immune system and help the body fight off infections. It is an adaptogen that increases the body's ability to handle stress, and contains anti-ageing properties.
- c) **Walnuts:** eating walnuts can sharpen the mind, and boost concentration and memory. In addition to helping the brain, walnuts can support the kidney's *Qi* and aid digestion by lubricating the intestine.
- d) **Goji Berry:** also known as wolfberries, goji berries have been used as an herbal remedy for over 3,000 years. They nourish the kidney essence that underpins human vitality. Goji berries are commonly eaten to improve eyesight.
- e) **Jujube Dates:** a warming food, the jujube date helps to strengthen the spleen and stomach's *Qi*. It also nourishes the blood.

#### What are the recommended types of food?

In TCM, the role of food and medicine overlaps. For example, watermelon is a type of food, but its hydrating properties could also serve as a medicating effect during hot days.

However, there are also some foods that are considered more 'medicine' than 'food'. For example, ginseng. When it comes to such 'medicine', a person should consult a practitioner since eating it could worsen one's body condition because our bodies interact differently with different foods.



Ginseng



Astragalus



Walnuts



Goji Berry



Jujube Dates

**“From the TCM’s perspective, a good diet would be a balanced one, where foods are consumed in appropriate combinations according to their natures and flavours. It is best to consume fresh foods that are free from chemicals, preservatives, and over-processing. It is also important not to eat too much (ideally about 70 per cent full) for each meal, and have food that is moderate in nature, so as to avoid straining the digestive organs,”**

advised Physician Tay.



#### What facts are often overlooked when consuming foods that are considered 'TCM healthy'?

When a person continually eats one type of food it creates an imbalance in their body, and this affects their health. For instance, foods with nourishing properties tend to be sweet in flavour (eg. red dates, goji berries) and overconsumption of such foods could lead to bloating. Foods with strong cooling properties tend to be bitter in flavour (eg. cooling herbal teas), and taking too much of them could cause diarrhoea or loose stools.

One of the key principles in TCM is to keep our body in a 'neutral' state. This can be achieved by eating the right food at the right time and in moderation.

#### Does consuming tonic help to improve overall wellness?



Tonic formulas help to augment or replenish the body substances when they are deficient or weak. It is important to first address the underlying deficiency before applying the appropriate tonic in order to obtain the maximum benefit. Commonly used herbs in tonics include astragalus (*Huang Qi*), ophiopogon tube (*Mai Dong*), goji berry, and Chinese angelica root (*Dang Gui*).

In general, herbal tonics help to strengthen the body, aid in sleep and digestion, or boost the immune system. They could involve individual tonic herbs or a combination of small formulas.

# Sugar and Inflammation: The Not-so-sweet Connection

By Joanna Lee

Sweetness has an almost universal appeal, and foods that contain sugar make them more appetising. While our love-hate relationship with sugar could be our daily struggle, Ms Bibi Chia, Principal Dietitian, Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre, shares why having too much of it can cause inflammation to your body, and how to start an anti-inflammatory diet.



## The Connection Between Sugar and Inflammation

Inflammation is a part of your body's normal response to infection or injury. It happens when your immune system is activated and tells your white blood cells to start repairing damaged tissues.

Processed sugars help release inflammatory messengers that can raise the risk of chronic inflammation that is linked to major diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and Alzheimer's.

When protein or fat combines with sugar, it results in harmful compounds called Advanced Glycation End Products (AGEs). Having too much sugar in your blood can cause your gut to become more permeable – resulting in bacteria and other inflammatory particles to enter more easily.

## The Sugary Facts

Whether natural or processed, all sugar is a type of simple carbohydrate that your body uses for energy. You can find natural sugar in fruits, vegetables and dairy foods. "Added sugars" refer

to sugars and syrups added to foods during processing.

Added sugars come in other names and the chemical name usually ends with 'ose'. Here is a list of those that are commonly found in the ingredient list:

- Sucrose
- Glucose
- Maltose
- Lactose
- Fructose
- Molasses
- Cane syrup
- Agave nectar
- Corn syrup
- Rice malt syrup
- Honey
- Malt or maple
- Hydrolysed starch

"Not all sugars are bad. Some sugars, such as lactose (dairy products) and glucose in fruits, are natural occurring and could be a good source of energy before and after exercise. However, we should limit our daily intake of added refined sugar to about 25g or 6 tsp," advised Ms Chia.

### 5 Simple Rules of Thumb for An Anti-inflammatory Diet

1. Eat more plants. Whole plant foods have the anti-inflammatory nutrients that your body needs. So eating a rainbow of fruits, vegetables and whole grains is the best place to start.
2. Focus on antioxidants. They help prevent, delay or repair some types of cell and tissue damage. Example, berries, oranges, leafy greens, beets and avocados, as well as beans and lentils, whole grains, ginger, turmeric and green tea.
3. Include Omega-3s. Omega-3 fatty acids play a role in regulating your body's inflammatory process and could help regulate pain related to inflammation. You can find them in healthy fats in fish like salmon, tuna and mackerel, as well as smaller amounts in soy, walnuts, pecans, and ground flaxseed.
4. Eat less red meat. Red meat can be pro-inflammatory. You may try substituting it with fish, chicken, nuts or soy-based protein.
5. Cut back on processed foods. Sugary cereals and drinks, deep-fried food, and pastries are all pro-inflammatory offenders. They can contain plenty of unhealthy fats that are linked to inflammation. But eating whole fruits, veggies, grains and beans can be quick if you prep ahead for multiple meals.



### 7 Tips to Reduce Added Sugars in Your Diet



Drink plain water, other calorie-free drinks, or low-fat milk instead of sugary sodas and bubble teas, or sports drinks.



Choose nutrient-rich snacks such as vegetables, fruits, low-fat, low-calorie yogurt, whole-grain crackers instead of pastries, cookies and candies.



When drinking fruit juice, ensure it's 100 per cent fruit juice and not juice drinks that have added sugars. The best option is to eat the fruit rather than drink the juice in order to get the fibre, and this helps to keep you full for a longer period.



Choose fresh fruit for dessert instead of cakes, cookies, pies, ice cream and other sweets.



Select breakfast cereals that contain less sugar. Skip sugary and frosted cereals.



Opt for reduced-sugar varieties of syrups, jams, jellies and preserves.



Buy canned fruit packed in water or juice, not syrup. If you do purchase fruit packed in syrup, drain and rinse it with water to remove excess syrup.





# On the Frontline with RMG

By Jonathan Yap and Joanna Lee

Working on the frontline especially during a pandemic certainly requires exceptional valour. This virtue is seen in Raffles Medical Group (RMG) employees as they fight against COVID-19 with the rest of Singapore.

Despite having to don the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for long hours, sacrificing family time during public holidays and festive seasons, and running the risk of being infected, they keep going. In this special edition of Up Close, we spoke to six employees to find out what motivates them during this unprecedented time.



## Catherine Chia

Senior Staff Nurse  
Raffles Hospital  
Pneumonia Ward

### What is a typical day like for you on the frontline?

We start the day by getting updates on who the “COVID-19 suspects” are. This is to ensure appropriate treatment and protection for both staff and patients are taken. Once the daily handover is completed, we proceed to don the full PPE and carry out our usual nursing duties and routines.

### How did you feel knowing that you may meet with confirmed COVID-19 cases?

I have encountered one patient who was tested positive for the virus, but I was not infected because of the safety measures that we have in place to protect frontliners from infections.

### Did you feel like giving up at any point in time? How did you overcome the challenges?

There was a point in time when I felt overwhelmed by the number of inpatients that my team and I had to

care for. It required us to put in extra working hours and effort to meet the demands. It was simply exhausting. However, we pressed on and refused to be deterred by the circumstance. Our doctors and nurses were well supported and everyone came together to work as a team to help each other. That was how we managed to ride through that extremely busy period.

### How did your friends and family react when they knew about you being on the frontline?

Most of them have been very supportive, and there was an outpouring of well-wishes and prayers for me. My mum would wait for me to come home from work to drink her double-boiled soups to ensure that my body is well nourished. I have a handful of friends, on the other hand, who tried to stay away from meeting me, but I could understand their reason for doing so.

### Is this deployment very different compared to your previous role?

Yes! I am now required to put on the full PPE for almost the entire shift. I am also tasked to co-lead the team and co-manage the ward. This added responsibility also means to ensure the well-being of my entire team (ie. to make sure my team members get adequate rest).

### What are some changes or sacrifices you have had to make because of this deployment?

Wearing an N95 mask throughout the shift is not easy for me because I have sinus issues. I need to take anti-histamines regularly because the material of the mask causes me to suffer from constant nasal congestion.

We are given scrub suits to wear and provided with shower facilities to use at the end of the shift. These precautionary measures help to ensure that we do not bring the germs home. In addition, I now limit my time spent with my nieces and nephew to minimise contact with younger members in the family.

### Tell us one memorable experience you have had to face in the course of your work.

A patient was admitted for breathing difficulties and had a history of heart disease and poorly controlled diabetes. I remember spending quite a substantial amount of time understanding his background and to educate him on how to better manage his condition. He was receptive to my advice. I felt really proud knowing that I have made a difference. Unfortunately, the joy was short-lived as it turned into fear after knowing that he was tested positive for COVID-19. Naturally, I feared bringing home the virus and spreading it to my elderly parents. I quickly got tested and thankfully the result was negative. That was quite a scare.

### What drives you to do what you do on a daily basis?

Though it may sound cliché, but I do what I do because of my “calling” to be a nurse. I am grateful that I am given the opportunity to serve on the frontline.

### What advice do you have for our readers?

Mask up and maintain social distance. Be responsible for yourself and your loved ones.



## Jeffrey Teng

Associate Director  
Raffles Medical  
Foreign Workers' Dormitory and  
Air Border Screening Team

### What is a typical day like for you on the frontline?

My daily work routine involves ensuring the clinics at the airport and border screening stations operate smoothly. To me, there isn't any major difference, except that now I have less time to catch up on administrative work because my team and I can only do so after our deployment is completed.

### How did you feel knowing that you may meet with confirmed COVID-19 cases?

Being on the frontline, we face the risk of coming in contact with an infected patient. We need to bear in mind to adhere to the safety measures that are put in place, as well as observe good personal hygiene and infection control in order to stay safe.

### Did you feel like giving up at any point in time? How did you overcome the challenges?

There were days in February and March where we got very little sleep. I recall getting only about three to four hours of sleep daily. I kept reminding myself that if my other healthcare colleagues are still hanging on, I too, must persevere. We are Singapore's first line of defence.

### How did your friends and family react when they knew about you being on the frontline?

All of them have been very supportive. Their main concern is for me to remain safe.

### Is this deployment very different compared to your previous role?

The deployment is very much the same except for the scale because it has grown by about 200 times. Previously, we rostered about 24 nurses and Healthcare Assistants (HCA) over a 24-hour period. At the peak of air border screening, we had to roster close to 478 nurses and HCAs instead.

### What are some changes or sacrifices you have had to make because of this deployment?

Fortunately for me, I live alone and see my family members only once a week. At one point, I was not able to meet them for at least two months. Many of us were also wary of coming into contact with our families as we may unknowingly spread the virus to them should we be asymptomatic. There is nothing much we can do except to press on until the situation improves.

### Tell us one memorable experience you have had to face in the course of your work.

Once, I was buying food along the way home. I ran into a close colleague who I always like to chat with. However, that day both of us felt so tired to even briefly catch up. We just waved and smiled to each other and went on our way. I thought it was quite sad because we are quite close and would usually chat with one another. However, we felt so worn out by the whole situation to the point that we were too tired to even want to engage in a conversation.

### What drives you to do what you do on a daily basis?

To safeguard our border because it is Singapore's first line of defence. This is what drives my colleagues and me to continue doing what we do. We have an important responsibility and we cannot fail.

### What advice do you have for our readers?

The simplicity of life is a luxury. Take care of yourselves and your loved ones. Avoid crowded places and practise safe distancing measures.



## Lim Choon Huat

Assistant Manager  
Raffles Neuroscience Centre  
Screening Station at Raffles Hospital

### What is a typical day like for you on the frontline?

I facilitate and ensure all patients and visitors experience a seamless screening process as they enter the hospital. I will also identify and escort patients who display acute respiratory infection symptoms to the Accident and Emergency department via an isolated route.

### How did you feel knowing that you may meet with confirmed COVID-19 cases?

I felt indifferent about this. As there were asymptomatic community cases, the risk of coming in contact with an undetected case was present even in our daily lives. With proper infection control measures in place at the screening area, we could substantially reduce the risk of any cross-infection.

### Did you feel like giving up at any point in time? How did you overcome the challenges?

No, I did not. Someone has to be on the frontline to ensure the safety of our patients. I am encouraged that I have like-minded colleagues from various departments whom I get to work with as a team towards this common goal.



**How did your friends and family react when they knew about you being on the frontline?**

They are supportive and encouraging, and even look up to me as a healthcare hero! I think the media and public announcements have helped to allay fears and alleviate negative connotation of frontline staff.

**Is this deployment very different compared to your previous role?**

It is not exactly very different. Working in the clinic operation setting does encompass a lot of interactions with patients, hence screening duty does not feel like a chore.

**What are some changes or sacrifices you have had to make because of this deployment?**

Sometimes I would be scheduled for weekend duties. This would mean less time spent with my loved ones and on my hobbies.

**Tell us one memorable experience you have had to face in the course of your work.**

Most of our patients know that although the screening process is a hassle to them, but they do appreciate that what we are doing is for their safety. We are mostly greeted with big smiles, and they are also courteous and polite towards us.

**What drives you to do what you do on a daily basis?**

I enjoy working in a friendly, energetic and positive working environment.

**What advice do you have for our readers?**

Take necessary precautions, then go out and live life!



**Mark Abarca**

Nurse Executive Operation  
Raffles Medical  
Community Care Facility -  
Cruise Ships

**What is a typical day like for you on the frontline?**

A typical day on the frontline is challenging especially when having to face different people from various walks of life. I have the privilege of caring for recovered COVID-19 migrant workers at the Marina Bay Cruise Centre. I manage the satellite Raffles Medical clinic and sickbay area. The sick bay is able to contain a total of 60 beds.

As part of my day-to-day nursing duties, I speak with the migrant workers and understand how they are coping. I also listen to their stories of having to be away from their families and friends. I can especially relate to that because I am also a foreigner working in Singapore too. I work with doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants to assess and review the care plans of our patients at the sickbay. I also coordinate with various government bodies regarding the status of migrant workers.

**How did you feel knowing that you may meet with confirmed COVID-19 cases?**

I used to be assigned to the Border Screening team at the airport where we dealt with MERS cases, and now COVID-19 cases. It is pretty much normal for me when it comes to dealing with viruses. It is important that I follow the strict safety protocols to protect myself.

**Did you feel like giving up at any point in time? How did you overcome the challenges?**

On some days, it did get tough. My two sources of strength came from God, who guides and protects me, and my colleagues.

I am thankful for having colleagues with an infectious positive attitude, and a manager, Ms Loke Mei Choo, who was very supportive of my post at the cruise centre.

**How did your friends and family react when they knew about you being on the frontline?**

They were afraid that I would be easily exposed to the virus. I have explained to them that being on the frontline is meaningful and purposeful for me. They are now very supportive and constantly pray for my safety.

**What are some changes or sacrifices you have had to make because of this deployment?**

Wearing full PPE all the time is very challenging. Our meal breaks were inevitably shorter. We were always on our feet and on the go. I became accustomed to the changes as the days went by.

**Tell us one memorable experience you have had to face in the course of your work.**

Some migrant workers stayed in the sickbay for a long time. It was always a bitter sweet moment when they recovered and moved back to their own dormitories. It was moving to see some of them thanking us with teary eyes. They were more than patients. They have become my "Bhai" (Bangladeshi term for brother).

**What drives you to do what you do on a daily basis?**

My mother, friends and the rest of Singapore who are fighting the virus have kept me motivated and going. I know that what we do is important and this helps keep Singapore safe. My oath as a nurse to help people keeps me strong.

**What advice do you have for our readers?**

Wear your mask at all times, wash your hands or sanitise them frequently. Be socially responsible. Little sacrifices can make a big impact to the community. Let's be united!



## Dr Ho Woon Yang

Family Physician  
Raffles Medical

CEC Medical Team at Community  
Care Facility – Changi Exhibition  
Centre (CEC)

### What is a typical day like for you on the frontline?

We have two shifts deployed at the CEC: 8am to 8pm and 8pm to 8am. This ensures that we provide round-the-clock medical coverage for the patients staying there. My typical work day begins with a handover session to take over cases from the previous shift. We will then be segregated into different roles that include providing tele-consultation for patients, swabbing of patients and staff, as well as entering the Red Zone to provide treatment for COVID-19 patients.

### How did you feel knowing that you may meet with confirmed COVID-19 cases?

As a doctor, I fully expect myself to meet and treat many infectious disease patients. I see this as part-and-parcel of the profession.

### Did you feel like giving up at any point in time? How did you overcome the challenges?

It was challenging when we initially had a large number of cases being diagnosed on a daily basis. The number of cases exceeded a thousand every day! However, I am working with a very supportive and dependable team of doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants. Their indomitable spirit to see this through inspires me to press on each day.

### How did your friends and family react when they knew about you being on the frontline?

My family and friends are aware that this is part of what I do. They have been supportive of my decision to be deployed on the frontline.

### Is this deployment very different compared to your previous role?

Yes, especially since I was in a corporate position at Raffles Health Insurance. Prior to COVID-19, I was returning to work as a family physician. I had barely warmed my seat in the clinic, and was deployed to the CEC to run a frontline Medical Centre that deals with both acute and emergency cases for patients who tested positive for COVID-19.

### What are some changes or sacrifices you have had to make because of this deployment?

One of the greatest challenge all frontline workers face is the unbearable heat from wearing the PPE for long hours. This results in many of us feeling dehydrated due to perspiration. On average, a team of 50 staff drinks up to six barrels of water each day, and each barrel has a capacity of 30 litres!

At home, some changes are expected. I wash my clothes separately from the rest of my family. I also ensure that I am feeling completely well before I interact with the elderly at home.

### Tell us one memorable experience you have had to face in the course of your work.

There was once my team and I had to attend to an emergency with a patient who sustained a bad laceration on his posterior scalp. We had to stabilise him before evacuating him to the accident and emergency department in record time.

It was a hair-raising yet exhilarating experience because every decision we make would affect the outcome for this patient. However, I am glad that the team of like-minded individuals were able to demonstrate exceptional professionalism and calmness in the face of an emergency. When we finally help the patient safely onto the ambulance, the sense of accomplishment was gratifying. The patient recovered soon after. I like to believe that this is largely due to our team's quick response when the incident first occurred.

### What drives you to do what you do on a daily basis?

It is understandable that all of us who were deployed to the CEC represent Team Raffles in the fight against COVID-19 with Singapore.

### What advice do you have for our readers?

Take personal responsibility to help fight the spread. Small actions like maintaining social distancing may not seem like much, but it counts towards keeping everyone safe.



## Dr Norkhalim Dalil

Family Physician  
Raffles Medical

Foreign Workers' Dormitory  
Roving Team

### What is a typical day like for you on the frontline?

Our typical day actually starts the night before. We will be given the tasks and addresses of the various dormitories or construction temporary quarters (CTQ) to visit. We then need to determine the exact location of these facilities and plan the best route to minimise time spent on the road. Google Maps has been such a lifesaver!

A typical roving team consists of a doctor, two nurses and two Patient Support Officers. We usually arrive at the first site at 9am, and on most days, all work will be completed by 3pm to 4pm.

My team is normally given five sites to visit. At each site, we need to see "report sick" cases and implement swab tests if needed. We also review all cases with chronic illness, all COVID-19 positive cases, and all workers who are 46 years old and above.

The requirement of donning one full PPE per site, means that we have to don the PPE and change out of it up to five times in a day.

### How did you feel knowing that you may meet with confirmed COVID-19 cases?

There was always this fear of getting infected or transmitting the disease to

family members. Our role required us to have physical contact with COVID-19 patients daily in order to ensure they were stable, and to refer them to the accident and emergency department accordingly if warranted.

### Did you feel like giving up at any point in time? How did you overcome your challenges?

No. While this assignment has taken me out of my comfort zone, we have been provided with sufficient medical resources for us to perform our duties well.

The positive feedback and encouragement from many colleagues have helped to keep me going.

### How did your friends and family react when they knew about you being on the frontline?

In the first few weeks, my family was very worried. However, after some time they learnt that medical staff are well-equipped and trained to protect themselves against infections. It was then that they became less worried. Friends who learnt about my posting were curious and asked many questions. Many of them have also sent me best wishes to stay safe and be well.

### Is this deployment very different compared to your previous role?

Yes, this is something unique that has not happened before. This is somewhat similar to my Ministry of Home Affairs / Prisons postings in previous RMG projects, where we had to see many patients daily (eg. foreigners who enter Singapore illegally or overstayers from other countries). The daily numbers could be 70 to 80, and sometimes exceeded 100 in one morning alone.

### What are some changes or sacrifices you have had to make because of this deployment?

This posting required me to endure more hardships during the fasting month. There was risk of dehydration with the prolonged wearing of PPE. I was drenched in sweat, yet unable to rehydrate.

Throughout this deployment, I also had to avoid visiting my parents-in-law and siblings to keep them safe.

### Tell us one memorable experience you have had to face in the course of your work.

One funny incident happened at one of the factory converted dorms (FCD). Upon arrival at the site, the dorm manager quickly approached me and asked what my team and I needed. Expecting a large number of cases to see, I gave him the logistical requirements to set up a makeshift clinic. He quickly deployed many workers to urgently set up what we needed while we waited. When the makeshift clinic was ready and the cases to be seen were called in, we realised there were only three! We could have seen the cases without the make-shift clinic. Nonetheless, we were touched by their effort to make us feel comfortable.

On another occasion, one factory owner provided us with fresh coconuts that were plucked on the spot from a nearby tree.

### What drives you to do what you do on a daily basis?

COVID-19 is a huge global problem at this moment. I am thankful that I have been given the opportunity to be a frontliner and contribute to our national efforts at mitigating the spread of the disease.

Many of the workers we see at the dorm were worried and anxious about the disease and it is rewarding to see them relax and feel assured with us around.

I have always enjoyed working out of the norm and this deployment provided a chance for me to learn about life in the dorms and construction sites.

### What advice do you have for our readers?

Be thankful and appreciate what we all have.



# Ask the Experts



## Q. What health precautions should hepatitis patients take note of?

**A.** Hepatitis is a type of infectious disease that causes liver inflammation. It may not cause any symptom in carriers. Therefore, there are many people who continue going about their daily lives without knowing that they are infected. Patients with chronic hepatitis B and C can transmit the disease to other people via sexual contact and blood.

Patients with chronic hepatitis B and C should not donate blood. They should practise barrier contraception although this would not completely eliminate the transmission risk. Sexual partners of Hepatitis B carriers should get Hepatitis B vaccination.

### Dr Lim Lee Guan

Specialist in Gastroenterology  
Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine  
Centre



## Q. Is it right to say that the flu season in Singapore is usually between December and February, as well as from May to July? If so, what would be a good time to get the flu vaccine?

**A.** Influenza, also known as the flu, is an infection caused by influenza viruses. Despite being commonly confused with the common cold, which is caused by other respiratory viruses, influenza is usually more severe. In temperate climates, influenza seasonal epidemics occur mainly during winter, while in tropical regions, influenza may occur throughout the year, causing outbreaks more irregularly. Singapore, though situated in the tropical region, is an international transit hub. Flu outbreaks in other major cities would inadvertently spread to Singapore. Hence, yes we do see an increased number of patients down with the influenza infection between December to February and May to July, we also see some influenza cases throughout the year.

The best time to receive the flu vaccine is two weeks before being exposed to the influenza virus. As the vaccine takes about two weeks before the protective effect kicks in. It is recommended to receive flu vaccine either by end October or by end April.

### Dr Tseng Hsien Cho

Family Physician  
Raffles Medical



## Q. How is tuberculosis (TB) contracted, and does latent TB have a higher chance of becoming active TB in people who are old or immunocompromised?

**A.** Tuberculosis is most commonly transmitted by a person with TB disease of the lung or respiratory airways. They emit infective aerosolised particles when they speak or cough, and close contacts may get infected when they inhale these aerosolised particles. Risk of infection increases with the duration of close contact.

Some people may develop active TB soon after getting infected, which usually infects the lung and presents with symptoms such as cough, fever, night sweats and weight loss. TB may also attack other parts of the body, such as the brain, spine and kidneys.

Others may develop latent TB infection (LTBI), which is "silent" and may not show symptoms for many years. Of these persons with LTBI, 5 to 10 per cent may subsequently develop active TB disease, with risk of progression being greatest in the first one to two years after infection.

Persons with weakened immune system and the following conditions are at particular risk of developing active TB infection:

1. Diabetes mellitus
2. Severe kidney disease
3. Organ transplants
4. Treatment with prolonged corticosteroid use or other immunosuppressive agents
5. Silicosis
6. Low body weight
7. HIV infection
8. Substance abuse

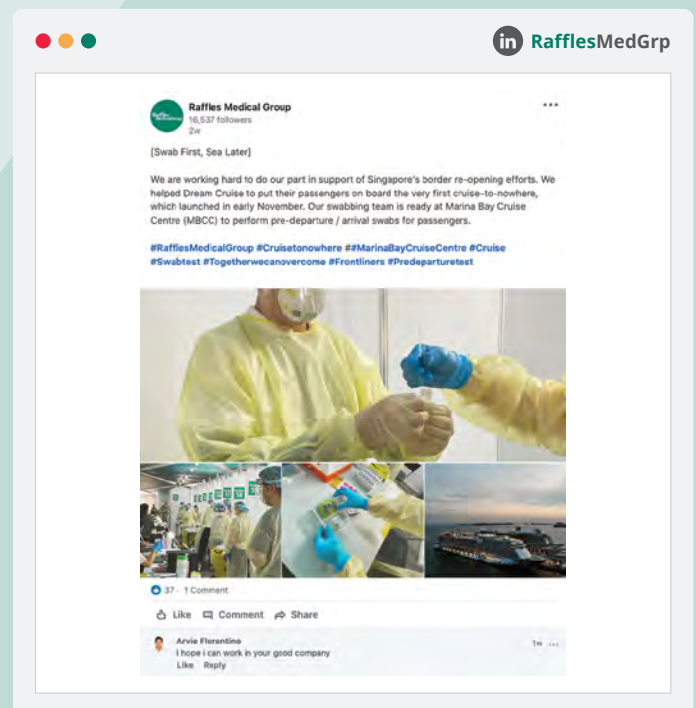
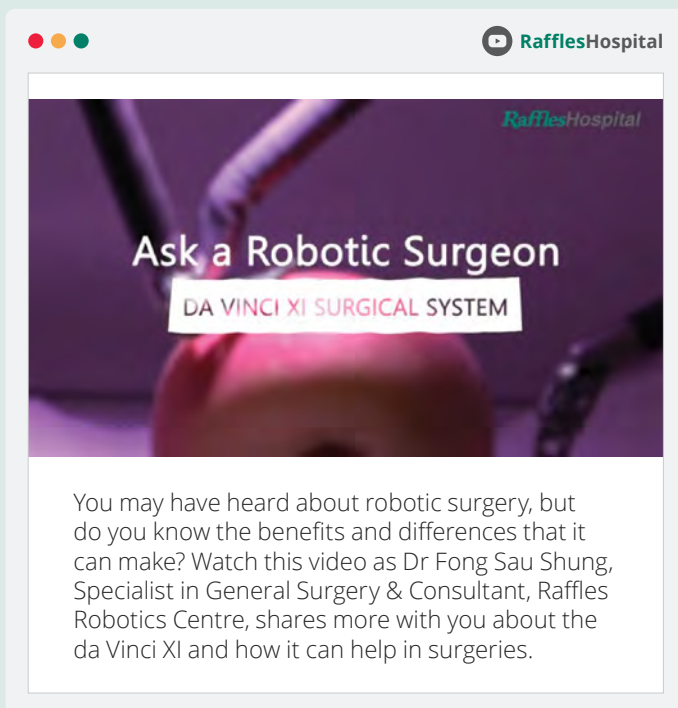
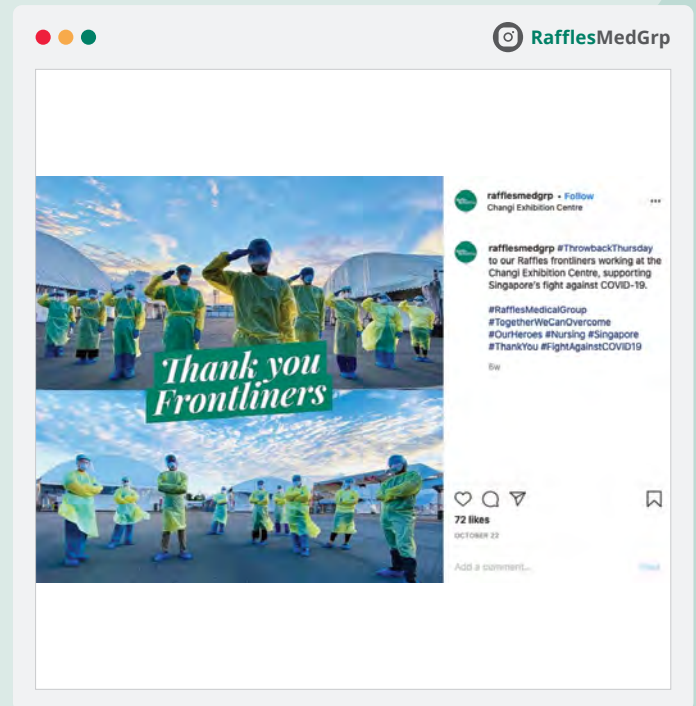
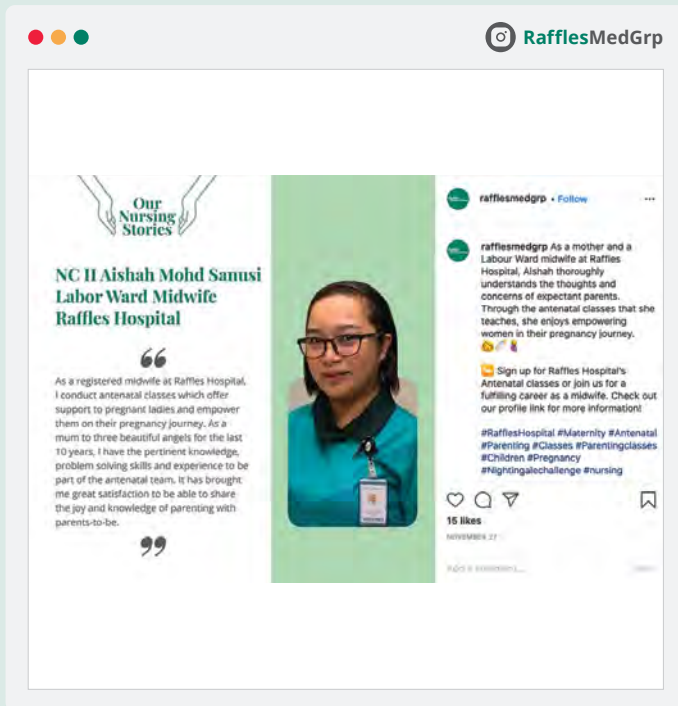
Individuals with the above conditions may be advised by their doctors to be screened for LTBI, and treated if diagnosed. Close contacts of persons diagnosed with active TB may also be advised to undergo screening.

### Dr Leyland Chuang

Specialist in Infectious Diseases  
Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine  
Centre

# Connect with Raffles

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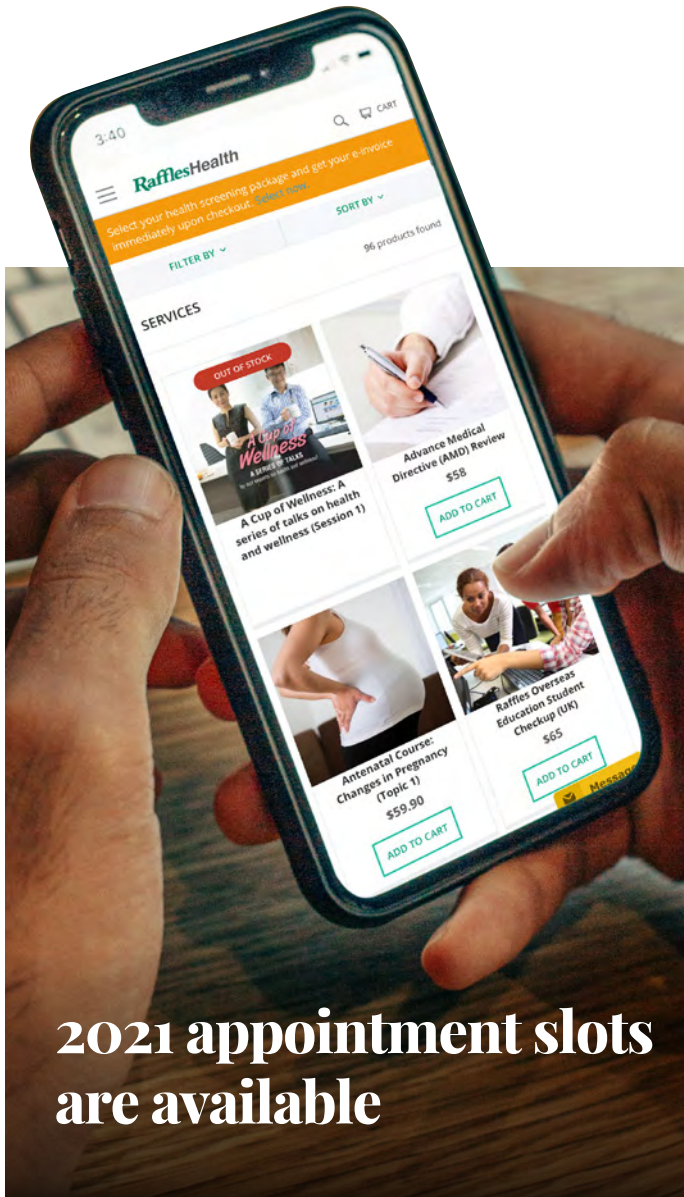
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*Florence Nightingale*

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