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Health groups should take lead from TTSH

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

THE new system introduced by Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) to display more accurate and updated waiting times (Nov 12) – would be beneficial to patients.

Therefore, given the level of proficiency achieved with this electronic endeavour, the National Healthcare Group (NHG) – together with corresponding hospitals, specialist clinics and polyclinics – should explore similar customisations to electronic systems to increase levels of efficiency.

Given the sheer number of Singaporeans who visit specialist outpatient clinics and polyclinics every day, it is imperative that the framework of appointments and waiting times is handled professionally.

At the present moment, patients comprehend the volume of cases that doctors and practitioners handle daily.

However, they are frustrated by the huge discrepancies between scheduled appointment times and actual consultation times, and the lack of information about doctor commitments or availability.

An electronic system would be able to achieve a number of things.

Firstly, it would list the patients who are waiting for the particular service and provide real-time prediction of waiting times.

This is especially important for elderly patients, who might need to consume their meals but are afraid of missing their queue numbers.

Secondly, the availability of the doctor, and whether he or she is scheduled for imminent surgery or last-minute emergency cases.

And, lastly, let individuals know if they might have missed their turn, so that appropriate arrangements or rescheduling can be speedily made.

Draw a clear line against smoking

Letter from Raymund Koh Joo Guan

IT HAS been a long time since the first smoking prohibition rule came into effect.

While I welcome the smoking prohibition at bus stops, building entrances and at all food establishments and entertainment joints, more could be done to draw a line clearly on how the smoking prohibition should be followed.

Many smokers still insist that, if they smoke at the border of a bus stop, it is still outside the bus stop. The fact is that, when smoking is prohibited, one should not smoke near the prohibited place as much as possible. I suppose we need legislation to keep such smokers at bay.

Also, smokers have started to do so in multi-storey car parks like those in Lucky Plaza, Causeway Point and Empress Road Food Centre. Some try to beat the law by smoking in the staircase wells of malls and buildings. I have encountered choking smoke stench in staircases of Nex mall, Lucky Plaza, Paragon, Compass Point and International Plaza. The smokers hide in the staircase landings and indulge in their habit there.

The authorities should perform an island-wide blitz to nab smokers who blatantly disregarded the law and cause distress to non-smokers. In fact, just a 20-minute drive on our roads would enable one to spot taxi drivers openly smoking in their vehicles. Isn't smoking strictly prohibited in public transport vehicles too?

Last but not least, if smoking in public places is not banned, those who walk behind a smoker along a footpath will certainly take in large quantities of second-hand smoke.

If smoking in public places is totally banned, it would certainly clear the air for all. It would be much cleaner with no more smoke menace where public access is. The authorities would also save on the need to carry out enforcement and to clean up cigarette litter.

Have dental subsidy for students

Letter from Dave Yap

IT WAS heartening to learn that the Ministry of Health is increasing the number of dentists to meet the dental needs of our ageing population (Nov 12).

Under the expanded Primary Care Partnership Scheme (PCPS), private general practitioners and dentists can provide common outpatient medical and dental treatment at subsidised charges. But what about schoolchildren? When the School Dental Service referred my daughter for consultation at our local dental centres (NUH Dental Centre and Tan Tock Seng

Hospital Dental Clinic, the two clinics that I managed to call through), I was shocked to learn that all of them are privatised and do not offer Government subsidy even it is a polyclinic or school referral.

Why do we only provide a subsidised rate to the elderly, while neglecting younger schoolchildren? It is only a matter of time for health or dental problems to worsen if they are not fixed in the early school years.

As I understand the qualifying age for the PCPS will be lowered from 65 to 40, why wait till then when you have an impending problem to deal with now?

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