

Patients who help to make hospitals and clinics better

by Tan Weizhen

09:14 PM Sep 30, 2011

SINGAPORE - A chronic patient at his polyclinic, Mr Sunny Soo, 61, decided one day that he wanted to be more than just that.

Mr Soo, who has high blood pressure and high cholesterol, decided to step forward and help relieve some of the burdens plaguing the clinic, such as the perpetual, heavy patient load at peak hours.

In November last year, he started volunteering three times a week, three hours each, at the Toa Payoh polyclinic. The retiree would manage the queues, stock up supplies and maintain conditions at the laboratory, and even give feedback on areas he feels fall short.

For his efforts, he was one of three patients awarded the Exemplary Patient Award on Friday by the National Healthcare Group. Patients are nominated by staff based on their helpful or respectful attitude to staff or other patients, as well as constructive suggestions to improve services.

One area Mr Soo had sought to improve was the patients' experience. He gave feedback to the clinic on the seating arrangement, which he had observed did not allow patients to view queue numbers that are called. His suggestion to rearrange the seats was accepted by his supervisor.

Said Mr Soo: "I have a passion for people. It is in my blood. I feel proud..to help in a small way so the doctors and nurses can use their energy for bigger things."

The other two winners are Mr Peter Tang, a nose cancer survivor who formed a support group for other patients and survivors, and National Skin Centre patient Koh Poh Tee who was recognised for her understanding manner to every staff who had attended to her.

"We have always rewarded and recognised staff for outstanding patient-centric care but not patients who have helped us make things better within our systems," said NHG Chief Quality Officer Nellie Yeo. "These patients' suggestions and feedback and their generosity in giving their time and energy to volunteer have made our institutions better for other patients."