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KidSTART: Singapore's approach towards a community-based family centered pediatric care

Community pediatrics is a recognized subspecialty overseas and is a relatively new concept in Singapore. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) defines it as the philosophy of delivery of child health care with the principles of high accessibility, holistic vision, collaboration with parents, interagency care and teamwork, advocacy directed at the needs of all children and a preventive orientation. It synthesizes clinical practice with public health principles directed towards providing optimal health care to a given child within the context of the family, school and community. Research has also shown that experiences in a child's early years can significantly influence his/her physical, cognitive and social development. In particular, children from vulnerable circumstances may face developmental challenges compared to their peers. On the other hand, a stronger parent-child relationship and holistic early childhood development can bring about positive impact on the child's lifelong outcomes and narrow the developmental gaps. KidSTART is a pilot program which aims to provide support and create conducive environment for learning and development for Singaporean children from economically disadvantaged families. The components include a home visitation program, a supported playgroup program and enhanced support to pre-schools. Children from eligible families can attend one or more of these components. Through these interventions, KidSTART hopes to ensure that children benefit from warm and nurturing relationships, age-appropriate and holistic child development with safe and secure home environment to grow up in. For home visitation, each at-risk expectant mother and her child will be given integrated support in the domains of health, child development and social services. In summary, there is a need to give children from these families in Singapore a good start in life. The program is currently at the pilot stage. The creation of an integrated sustainable working model will allow for future up-scaling of such model across the entire country.

Biography

I have been working in KK Women's and Children's Hospital, Singapore, since 2007, with keen interest in paediatric patient care, and both undergraduate and postgraduate education. I have undergone previous traineeship in Paediatric Seamless Program, with rotations through Neonatology, Children's Emergency and Paediatric Medicine. At the moment, I am involved in KidSTART, a pilot collaboration between Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) and KKH, aiming to help disadvantaged families and children by identifying early developmental issues, growth delays, maternal mental health issues. Through early interventions, the pilot project hopes to achieve better integration of such families into the community agencies, rectifying paediatric growth and developmental delays through counseling and referral to tertiary institutions, to ensure good outcomes for them.

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