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SPEECH BY DR ALINE WONG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH, AT
THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY OF THE INSTITUTE OF HEALTH/
NATIONAL DENTAL CENTRE ON SATURDAY, 30 JANUARY 1993
AT 10.00 AM AT FIRST HOSPITAL AVENUE

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today marks a significant event in the history of both primary health care and dental health care in Singapore. We are breaking the ground for the construction of the Institute of Health and the National Dental Centre.

INSTITUTE OF HEALTH

A major emphasis of our National Health Policy is health promotion and disease prevention. My Ministry is giving priority to this by bringing together services and departments which provide preventive medicine and health education into the new Institute of Health to generate the synergy to give health promotion and preventive health a boost.

The IOH will house a Health Education Centre, Health Screening and Stay Well Centre, Family Practice Clinic, the Child Psychiatric Clinic, the School Health Clinic, School Dental Clinic, and the Government Officials' Clinic. There will be appropriate medical support facilities like X-ray, laboratory and pharmacy.

The Health Education Centre will focus on educating and helping the individual keep fit and healthy. It will have interesting exhibits as well as a wide range of audiovisual and print materials for use by the public.

The Health Screening and Stay Well Centre will conduct screening programmes for the early detection of common diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancers of the breast, womb and colon. People found to be at risk of developing a disease will be given health education information and be invited to classes on behaviour modification in relation to nutrition, weight management, exercise and other health topics. Those detected to have a specific condition will be referred for

treatment.

The Family Practice Clinic will emphasise good doctor-patient relationship through the provision of personalised, comprehensive and continuing medical care. It will replace three existing clinics in the central area. These are the Maxwell and Rochor Outpatient Dispensaries and the Institute of Health Maternal & Child Health Clinic.

NATIONAL DENTAL CENTRE

Dental health is an important and integral part of overall health. The National Dental Centre or the NDC will provide a wide range of primary and specialised dental care for Singaporeans. It will replace the services at the Government Dental Clinic, the Institute of Dental Health and Pegu Road Dental Clinic.

All aspects of specialised dental care including crown and bridgework, orthodontics and dental implants will be available at the NDC.

There will be facilities for day surgery, thus saving on the necessity for a hospital admission for many patients requiring oral surgery.

IOH AND NDC AS TRAINING CENTRES

Both the IOH and NDC will serve as important training centres for undergraduates, post-graduates and para-medical staff.

The training of doctors at undergraduate and post-graduate level is being strengthened to improve the standard of primary medical care. The National University of Singapore is revamping its undergraduate medical curriculum to place greater emphasis on primary care and increase the duration of time medical students spend in primary care clinics.

At the post-graduate level, my Ministry, together with the National University of Singapore and the College of General Practitioners, has already embarked on the training of future generations of family practitioners. The doctor undergoes a thorough 3-year structured training programme during which he attends lectures and workshops, and rotates through 2 years of hospital postings which are most relevant to family practitioners. (These are internal medicine, surgery, paediatrics, obstetrics & gynaecology, accident & emergency medicine, geriatrics, psychiatry, dermatology, eye, ENT and orthopaedics). During the third year of the programme, he receives special supervision and training in an outpatient setting in a government polyclinic or approved GP clinic. At the end of the 3-year training programme, he sits for the Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) examination, the first of which will be conducted in July this year. With this very comprehensive training, GPs of the future will be able to provide an even better standard of health care and will be even more effective as gatekeepers of secondary and tertiary medical services.

All the government polyclinic doctors will be trained so that they can become family practitioners in the true sense of the word. This means that they will be providing care for illnesses as well as developmental screening for preschool children, antenatal care, family planning and screening services. Care by the polyclinic doctor will, as far as possible, be personalised, continuing and comprehensive. In other words, the same doctor will look after the patient and members of his family.

When completed, the Family Practice Clinic at IOH will

be a model family clinic for the training of family doctors.

The NDC will serve as an important training centre for undergraduates and newly graduated dental officers. It will also provide specialist training for dental residents. Together with the National University of Singapore, it will provide training in the disciplines of oral & maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics and prosthodontics.

The provision of quality dental care involves not only dental surgeons, but also dental nurses, dental assistants and technicians. The training of these auxiliary staff will be carried out not just to meet the Ministry's needs, but the nation's needs as well.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate that the building of the Institute of Health and the National Dental Centre demonstrates government's commitment towards the promotion of health and provision of quality and highly subsidised primary health care. The total cost for the construction of the IOH and the NDC is \$140 million. The project will be completed in about 4 years' time, in 1996.

I would like to congratulate the many people involved in the planning of the IOH and the NDC, including those involved in the many workgroups apart from the main Planning Committees. Your hard work and vision will now be translated into physical form. I look forward to the successful development of the Institute of Health and the National Dental Centre.

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