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Media Release

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## **3,000 VULNERABLE SENIORS IN BUKIT MERAH ASSISTED TO AGE IN PLACE THROUGH A COORDINATED NETWORK OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

- 1 More than 3,000 frail and vulnerable seniors in Bukit Merah have been benefitting from a network of community support services since January 2013. Through active aging options ranging from Senior Activity Centres, to case management support and a Senior Group Home for more frail elderly, many vulnerable seniors in the Bukit Merah area have been able to age more successfully in their homes and community. This was shared at the official opening of NTUC Health Cluster Support (Bukit Merah) office today, graced by MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC and Adviser to Henderson-Dawson Grassroots Organisations, Ms Joan Pereira.
- 2 Said Ms Pereira, “In 2014, 12.4 per cent of the population in Singapore was above 65 years of age. This figure is projected to increase to 19 per cent by 2030. The number of elderly people living alone in Singapore will more than double from 35,000 in 2012 to 83,000 by 2030. Community care is critical for such seniors especially in view of rising healthcare costs, and the challenge in navigating the social and healthcare system by themselves.”
- 3 As Cluster Operator of the Bukit Merah Senior Cluster Network under the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), NTUC Health coordinates with the different eldercare providers in the area, and serves as a single point of contact for seniors to connect them to services they may need, such as

regular food delivery, medical escort services and government financial assistance. For instance, NTUC Health works closely with government agencies such as the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) to support seniors with mental health needs through the CREST programme (*See Annex A for description of CREST*). It also works with Social Service Offices (SSOs) to obtain financial assistance for the seniors.

- 4 Said Mr Leon Luai, NTUC Health's Head of Clinical Services & Wellness, "With the help of a social worker whom our seniors know and trust through regular contact, it lessens their anxiety in navigating the social and healthcare system, and they can get the support that they need to age in a familiar and comfortable environment."
- 5 One example of a senior who has benefitted from this network of community support is 79-year-old Mr Oh Chye Thiam. Mr Oh, who does not have any immediate family members, was referred to NTUC Health's Senior Group Home after suffering a stroke which left him dependent on others for simple daily activities. NTUC Health Cluster Support team coordinated meal deliveries for Mr Oh, and arranged for escort and transport services for his medical follow-ups. It also arranged for Mr Oh's medication packing and vital signs monitoring services to be done by NTUC Health's day care centre (Silver Circle) located on the ground floor of the Senior Group Home. With Mr Oh's basic needs met, he is able to continue living independently. He shared, "I enjoy the freedom here in the Home. Whenever I am free, I will take part in the activities in the Senior Activity Centre downstairs or do some simple exercises in the neighbourhood park. Other times I can relax in my room and chat with my roommate."
- 6 With frequent hospital admissions often resulting from seniors not complying with their medication, the Cluster Support team has also made a difference to the lives of seniors at Bukit Merah. 66-year-old Mr Ullaganathan lives with his wife in a two-room rental flat in Lengkok Bahru. Feeling confused and

overwhelmed with the different medications prescribed for his multiple medical conditions such as heart problems, pneumonia, hypertension and high cholesterol, he stopped taking the medications and did not go for his medical appointments. As a result, his health deteriorated. With the intervention care and weekly visits from NTUC Health's Principal Pharmacist together with Assistant Care Manager Ms Diyanah Hashim, as well as regular visits from CAN Carer Ms Elizabeth Ho three times a week, Mr Ullaganathan eventually stepped up to take charge of his health, packing and taking medications on his own. With a renewed determination to maintain his own wellbeing, coupled with the support of the NTUC Health Cluster Support team and its partners, Mr Ullaganathan has not been readmitted to hospital. Mr Ullaganathan shared, "Now, my chest does not hurt so much and I can breathe better. I can even do household chores. Sometimes I go out to meet my cousin, or join my friends in the senior activity centre for outings or play games."

## **PROVIDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF**

- 7 The close working relationship with many partners in the community is vital for NTUC Health to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable seniors well. One such partnership is with SIM University (UniSIM) through the inking of a Memorandum of Understanding today. The partnership opens the way for practicum opportunities for UniSIM students in the Counselling, Social Work and Gerontology programmes at NTUC Health's senior activity centres, nursing homes, Cluster Support and home care services. The partnership will subsequently extend to volunteering and research opportunities as well. NTUC Health staff will also be able to take up university-level SkillsFuture courses and training at UniSIM to be further equipped in caring for seniors.

**END**