



NDC is Singapore's referral centre for patients needing specialist oral healthcare. With 92 fully-equipped dental operatories and a day surgery centre with six operating theatres, the Centre has a staff strength of 371. Actively engaged in teaching and clinical research, NDC aims to set the standard for the practice of dentistry in Singapore.



Dr Kwa Chong Teck
Executive Director, NDC

A crisis tests an organisation's true calibre and we are proud that the Centre has stood up to the various challenges, even unexpected ones, thrown our way in the past year. We are now in an era where quick response to change to our environment is becoming more and more vital. In an indirect manner, the unexpected challenges provided us with a valuable opportunity to go beyond our comfort zones and to stretch ourselves to innovate.

Even as we move forward, consolidating and building on our strengths to face the new challenges and opportunities, the important lessons from the past year will serve as a reminder to propel us on. The Centre's emphasis on clinical excellence in service delivery and growing talents for the nation's dental industry will continue to guide its development in the coming years.

★ clinical excellence

One-Stop Clinic for Patient-Centric Services

The establishment of 'M' Clinic, or Multi-Disciplinary Clinic, during the year promoted multidisciplinary team management as one of the cornerstones of clinical practice at the NDC. Here, dental specialists would collaborate with medical specialists to manage complex conditions requiring oral rehabilitation. 'M' Clinic, now located on the fourth level, would thus provide a facility for joint consultations with specialists of different disciplines.

Patients could now be attended to at a single location without the need to move about different clinics within NDC or to other healthcare facilities. The result was a patient-centric clinic offering a range of specialist programmes coordinated and delivered seamlessly and effectively to patients.

Pioneer in Surgical Nerve Repair Services

NDC became one of the first few specialist oral healthcare facilities in Southeast Asia to offer surgical nerve repair services. These services utilised microsurgery to augment the main surgical treatment options, recognising that nerve injuries would be an inherent risk in any surgical or dental procedure despite the best care provided. Since its introduction, NDC

had seen an increase in referrals from both local and regional practitioners.

Training Culture to Enhance Clinical Care Delivery

NDC continued to provide training opportunities to enhance its staff's care delivery abilities. Opportunities were presented in the form of update lectures, scientific meets, workshops and seminars throughout the year. Influenced by the strong training culture, NDC clinicians clocked a total of 6,654 training hours during the year in review.

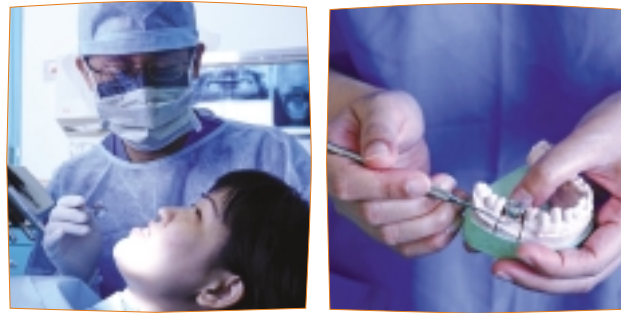
collaboration

Specialised Expertise Extended to SNEC

NDC collaborated with the Oculoplastic Unit of the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) in August 2003 to set up an in-house ocular prosthetic service for ophthalmic patients within SNEC. This collaboration sought to bring NDC's clinical expertise and services in maxillofacial prosthetics to sister institutions.

In this partnership, NDC was instrumental in contributing expertise in the area of designing the prosthetic unit, which consisted of a state-of-the-art operatory and a mini laboratory.

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Its maxillofacial prosthodontist and support team would provide ophthalmic prosthetic services in ocular and orbital prostheses, conformer shells, polishing and modification at the facility on a monthly basis.

In another joint project with SNEC, NDC worked on the development of the new Osteo-Odonto Keratoprosthesis procedure, a revolutionary two-staged surgical procedure that helped a blind 19-year-old boy from Thailand to see. The procedure involved precision-shaping of a cylinder from live tooth-bone and subsequently implanting it into the patient to allow light to enter the eye. It was believed to be the first such procedure in Southeast Asia.

Dental Management for Patients on Therapeutic Radiation
NDC worked with the National Cancer Centre (NCC) to further enhance the formalised protocol on the dental management of irradiated head and neck cancer patients for the Therapeutic Radiation Registry, a national database on outcomes of such patients.

Radiation treatment for head and neck cancers often affect patients' dentition and oral functions, resulting in condition such as dry mouth and increased susceptibility to dental decay. The protocol sought to ensure the dental needs of patients needing radiation therapy were taken care of at every stage of

their treatment, allowing for greater comfort and optimal oral functions in the treatment duration.

Training Programmes to Shape the Industry

NDC continued to be an active initiator in providing training opportunities to the industry believing that the ongoing upgrading of professional knowledge would drive the future development of dentistry in Singapore. More than half of NDC's specialist clinical staff members were faculty members of the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Dentistry, providing lecturing and clinical mentorship for both undergraduate students and postgraduate specialists-in-training.

Its training activities also encompassed formal certificate programmes for dental surgery assistants and dental technicians, partnering Australia's Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technical Education respectively in providing quality education in these areas.

commitment

SARS Protection for Patients and Staff

Various aspects of NDC's capabilities were tested during the national SARS crisis of 2003. Quick operational reorganisation, taking into consideration various precautionary measures, was



executed to ensure that the public would continue to have access to the full range of excellent specialist oral healthcare services. Multidisciplinary clinical floors, which were set-up to ensure service continuity, were since retained as permanent features of NDC, enhancing seamless service delivery to patients.

NDC also took the lead in collaborating with the Ministry of Health to coordinate and provide infection control training to all dental practitioners in the country. The training sessions, held over two weekends, covered hands-on sessions as well as information updates for dental practitioners on developments of the virus outbreak.

For its contributions during the SARS crisis, NDC received the president's Certificate of Commendation at the 2003 Singapore National Day Awards. Specifically the award recognised its efforts to deliver a public health service whilst actively preventing the spread of the outbreak through the national strategy of protection-detection-isolation and its role in the active training of dental professionals and sharing of updates with dental practitioners nationally.

Operational Improvements for Service Improvements

NDC embarked on several quality improvement projects during the year, several of which were aimed at directly improving the patients' service experiences. In particular, these efforts reduced overall waiting time for treatment appointments, improved telephone service access rates and enhanced the provision of clinical service information for patients.

Further plans were being implemented to improve various aspects of the NDC's operations with IT enablers coupled with process improvements. These would cover efficiencies in appointment booking, call management and material management systems as well as financial reporting.

Best Practices in Clinical Care

NDC continued to track 14 clinical indicators actively to enable the measurement and benchmarking of clinical service provision against other oral healthcare institutions of similar scale in the world. These systems, which were implemented in 2002, had been collecting valuable data to support NDC's move towards best practices in patient management.

Recognition for Achievements

Attesting to the best practices adopted in the delivery of support services, NDC achieved ISO 9001 certification for its dental laboratory, central supplies, sterilisation and radiographic services. NDC also received the H.E.A.L.T.H Award (Silver), which recognised its commitment in workplace health promotion for staff.

NDC		
	FY 2003	FY 2002
Workload		
Day Surgeries	5,360	5,918
Dental Attendances	143,353	160,897
Dental Procedures	147,896	160,279
Staffing (Average Monthly)		
Total	277	275
Dentists	67 ⁺	66
Nurses	12	13
Dental Surgery Assistants	50 [#]	45
Allied Healthcare Professionals	27	26
Others (Admin/ Ancillary)	122	125

⁺: Excludes 15 Dental Officers (DOs) deployed to SAF Dental Clinics; 35 DOs posted to School Dental Clinics; 11 DOs posted to SingHealth Polyclinics and 22 DOs pursuing Residency Programmes

[#]: Includes 8 trainees pursuing Certificate III in Dental Assisting programme