Media Release
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MIGRANT HEALTH RELIEF FUND
HealthServe launches new fund to combat effects from COVID-19 outbreak

SINGAPORE, 13th March 2020 – HealthServe has set up a designated fund in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore to support low wage and disadvantaged migrant communities and to help launch a hybrid telemedicine service – the first, in its 14 year history.

When Singapore raised its disease outbreak response level to DORSCON Orange due to the spread of COVID-19, the public response as well as protocols that were suddenly put in place by healthcare institutions led to unprecedented repercussions within HealthServe and the migrant worker community in Singapore.

Challenges faced by HealthServe includes:

- An unprecedented shortage of volunteer doctors because of restricted movement circulars issued in hospitals when the alert was raised. HealthServe’s volunteer doctor pool has dropped from 120+ doctors to less than 10 doctors available to come into our clinics.
- From 11th February 2020, HealthServe closed their Jurong and Mandai clinics and now only runs 1 clinic in Geylang, 3 times a week sometimes only at 40% of operational capacity. Even with one clinic in operation they are still unable to find enough doctors to meet the need and turn away migrant workers every clinic session.
- HealthServe’s clinics unable to procure supplies due to worldwide shortage.
- Suspension of in-house Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy and TCM sessions and cancellation of mental wellness group outings.

Called the ‘Migrant Health Relief Fund’, it was set up on 12th March 2020 and upon launch, it already raised $5,000 through private backers. HealthServe aims to raise $100,000 from the public, for the fund to be able to meet all its objectives.

The objectives of the fund are:

1. To provide relief and support to the wellbeing of low wage or disadvantaged migrants in Singapore and their families who are directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19 and future public health emergencies or outbreaks. E.g. Migrants who are: confirmed cases, placed under quarantine orders, in ICU or who need further follow up care after recovery.
2. To support HealthServe with material and financial support to cover unbudgeted operational upgrades, structural impact, increases in client/patient visits, supply usage, staff costs and additional resources incurred during times of public health emergencies and outbreaks.
3. To support preventive measures and build awareness amongst the migrant worker community in response to public health emergencies and outbreaks.

The upcoming schemes that the fund will support will include a historic first in their 14 year history - Telehealth Services for Migrant workers. Forced to innovate due to COVID-19, HealthServe’s tele-collaboration clinical service is a blended care model where volunteer doctors manage clinic patients remotely with skilled assistants physically in the room. Medicines are dispensed in-person in the HealthServe clinic and there is always a doctor on site to review any complex cases.

“It is our hope that by deploying a hybrid telemedicine service, we can continue to keep providing consultations to as many patients as possible and potentially reopen our 2 clinics in Mandai and Jurong after completing successful trials at our Geylang clinic. Through the Migrant Health Relief fund, we also wish to raise support for the migrant communities in Singapore affected by the COVID-19 outbreak” said Michael Cheah, HealthServe’s Executive Director.
As the COVID-19 situation evolves worldwide, HealthServe hopes to utilise the funds to support the following areas:

- Healthcare prevention packs for Special Pass Holders in Singapore
- Caring for the wellbeing of migrant workers serving quarantine order or LOAs.
- Follow up care for confirmed cases of migrant workers infected with COVID-19
- Telecounselling services for migrant workers
- Awareness talks and focus groups for migrant workers to answer questions and alleviate fears.

The public is invited to give to the fund through a dedicated page on HealthServe’s official website - [www.healthserve.org.sg/migrant-health-relief-fund](http://www.healthserve.org.sg/migrant-health-relief-fund). All donations above $50 are entitled to 250% tax deduction.

For Media Enquiries:
Suwen Low
HealthServe, Head of Communications and Engagement
Email: suwen@healthserve.org.sg

About HealthServe
HealthServe is a non-profit IPC registered charity that believes in a society where every migrant worker lives a life of dignity. Started in 2006 by Dr Goh Wei Leong and Tang Shin Yong, it seeks to bring healing and hope to migrant workers in Singapore through the provision of medical and dental care, injury and salary-related casework support, social services, counselling, and mental health programs. Its four (4) centres across Singapore are managed and operated by a team of 18 staff and 600+ medical and non-medical volunteers and interns.