

## Parkway opens one-stop diabetes centre

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SEEKING different specialists – and incurring higher costs – when you contract diabetes can be a thing of the past with a new one-stop centre at Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

The hospital – operated by Parkway Hospitals Singapore – unveiled its new Diabetes Care Centre yesterday, promising a 30 per cent decrease in the cost of treating diabetes, as compared to its private sector peers.

Diabetic patients usually run the risk of complications like heart disease, kidney problems and eye diseases, said Dr Akira Woo, medical director of the diabetes care centre at Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

“You might need to see five or six different specialists and the cost will be high,” said Dr Woo. “Here we have one stop where we can scan all the organs so we can cut the costs by 30 to 40 per cent.”

The specialist doctors at the diabetes centre include ophthalmologists (eye), nephrologists (kidney), neurologists (nervous system), endocrinologists (diabetes) and cardiologists (heart).

The para-medical professionals include dietitians, podiatrists, pharmacists, phys-

iotherapists and exercise trainers.

The opening of the diabetes centre coincides with a rise in the number of people contracting diabetes.

A survey conducted by the Ministry of Health found that 8.2 per cent of Singaporeans or over 300,000 people had diabetes – the eighth most common cause of death here.

The World Health Organization estimates that the global diabetes population will grow to more than 200 million by 2010.

Opening alongside the diabetes centre is the Preventive Healthcare Centre, which will address the need for behaviour change before

the onset of a chronic illness. This will be achieved through regular health screenings and counselling. Both centres, which cost about \$800,000 to set up, will be located on the 15th level of Paragon shopping centre.

Guest-of-honour Minister of State for Health Heng Chee How, reiterated the ministry’s strategy of keeping costs down through a policy of preventive health care.

“We need to help more people manage their health and avoid catching the disease,” he said.

“We also need to help people lead a healthy lifestyle so as to minimise the lifetime cost of health care.”

**Here we can scan all the organs and so cut costs by 30 to 40 per cent.**

— Dr Akira Woo, medical director of the diabetes care centre, Mount Elizabeth Hospital

## 6 new sites open for hotel development

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IN ANTICIPATION of the 17 million tourists Singapore aims to draw in by 2015, the Ministry of National Development has released six new sites for hotel development at once – a move that does not come as a surprise to property analysts.

In releasing its land sale programme for the next six months, the Government also put up for tender a prime 3.5-hectare site, located at the junction of Beach Road and Middle Road, which will feature a mix of office space and high-end hotel rooms.

All in, including two other hotel sites announced earlier, some 4,155 hotel rooms could greet tourists.

“With the insufficient hotel rooms to meet the demands of 17 million visitors, it’s not surprising that there’s a surge in the num-

ber of hotel sites,” said CB Richard Ellis (CBRE) research executive director Li Hiaw Ho.

The six new hotel sites – one each at Mohamed Sultan Road, Balestier Road, Merchant Road, Upper Pickering Street, and two at Tanjong Pagar Road – are on a reserve list. They will only be released for sale if interested developers apply for them to be put up for tender.

CBRE Research’s Mr Li felt that the current interest in hotel development is strong, pointing out that a hotel site on Clemenceau Road had been triggered for tender just three weeks after appearing on the reserve list earlier this year.

The Mohamed Sultan Road site is expected to attract plenty of developer interest, given its proximity to the entertainment areas of Boat Quay and Clarke Quay, he said.

Another reason for the jump in hotel sites could

be potential plans to redevelop existing hotel sites for residential use, said Knight Frank director of consultancy and research Nicholas Mak.

“There is an increase in demand (for residences) in the high-end market,” said Mr Mak. “So these new sites could also be meant to replenish the existing hotel sites that are not safeguarded and could be redeveloped.”

Interesting to property watchers was the site at Balestier Road, which could be aimed at tourists looking for budget accommodation, he added.

Other additions to the reserve list are three residential sites, a “white” site located at Racecourse Road, which can be developed for any use, two commercial sites, one site for retirement housing and a short-term lease site for recreational use at Punggol Point.



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OOI BOON KEONG

**AS THIN AS PAPER:** Professor Seeram Ramakrishna holding the newly-spun nanofibre.

## Nanofibre technology coming your way

IT LOOKS like simple piece of paper, but this small but powerful membrane is the prototype to a lighter gas mask used by healthcare or military workers in the future.

Created by a group of National University of Singapore (NUS) researchers, it is one of the many useful applications in the current hotspot in research and development – nanotechnology.

Made from nanofibres – fibres which are a hundred times smaller than a strand of human hair – the material is not only light, it can also neutralise chemical agents into non-toxic ones.

The \$200,000 two-year project, which is funded by the Defence Science and Technology Agency, also paves the way for lighter

and more comfortable protective suits and gas masks used during chemical attacks.

Traditional gear is heavy, uncomfortable, non-porous and need to be specially disposed of.

Professor Seeram Ramakrishna, Dean, NUS Faculty of Engineering, said: “We have tested it in the past one year and we find that it’s 10 times better in terms of deactivation of chemical warfare agents, stimulants ... it not only absorbs the chemical agents but actually detoxifies them.”

The nanofibre technology has already been used in NUS’ other labs to create scaffolds for growing stem cells. There are also plans to use it in water and air purification treatment. — CHEOW XIN YI