Younger but tapping healthcare as frequently

Medications expensive in north of S'pore despite younger population, says NHG chief

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

People living in the north of Singapore are in line for a younger age group.

In the north and central areas of Singapore, 26 per cent of public healthcare patients account for 44 per cent of public healthcare expenditures. The average age is younger, skewing younger.

“Where the north is concerned — the top 20 per cent of patients who get the highest portion of healthcare care — it is 44.4 years in central areas but 38.2 years in the north. The Chinese have their health at 80 years and older, so the younger age than the other races is also apparent,” said Dr Matthias Toh, who oversees budget allocations for all health-related expenditure, in an interview with The Straits Times.

While the north is the country’s most industrialised region, it also has lower rates of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, which may lower their risk of health-related expenditure.

The north’s lower level of at-risk diabetes and hypertension cases means it also has a lower rate of hospitalisation. This is reflected in a lower healthcare utilisation rate, or HUR, for the north compared to the rest of Singapore.

“People in the north get about 20 per cent less healthcare than those in other parts of the country,” said Dr Toh.

He had expected that since the north has a younger population, residents would utilise healthcare more. But patients in the north are, on average, 6.8 years younger, but tapping into healthcare as frequently as those in other parts of the country.

Dr Toh laid out the reasons for the lower healthcare utilisation rate in the north:

• Aged 65 years and older;
• Frail and who have chronic illness;
• Have had a disability which resulted in a disability;
• Aged 65+ result in a disability;
• Aged 65+

Dr Toh said the lower healthcare utilisation rate in the north may also be due to other factors, such as patients being more aware of their health status.

More variety of healthy and localised food choices

FROM B1

More variety of healthy and localised food choices

Dr Toh said the lower healthcare utilisation rate in the north may also be due to other factors, such as patients being more aware of their health status.

More variety of healthy and localised food choices

Dr Toh said the lower healthcare utilisation rate in the north may also be due to other factors, such as patients being more aware of their health status.

More variety of healthy and localised food choices

Dr Toh said the lower healthcare utilisation rate in the north may also be due to other factors, such as patients being more aware of their health status.

More variety of healthy and localised food choices

Dr Toh said the lower healthcare utilisation rate in the north may also be due to other factors, such as patients being more aware of their health status.