

## Newsletter

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## More Medical Service Providers Join the Ministry of Health's Telemedicine Sandbox

On 7 September 2018, four more medical service providers, namely, MyDoc, Doctor Anywhere, Speedoc, and MaNaDr have joined the Singapore Ministry of Health's ("MOH") regulatory sandbox for telemedicine. The sandbox, which was set up in April 2018 under the MOH's Licensing Experimentation and Adaptation Programme ("LEAP"), is meant to enable the participating medical service providers to offer novel and innovative medical services while keeping within specified patient safety and welfare parameters set by MOH. The result is a safe and controlled space in which these providers can develop and refine their services, given that such medical services are not currently regulated under the present regulatory framework set out in the Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Act ("PHCMA").

Participation in the sandbox will also equip these providers with insights into the new telemedicine regulations as they develop. This would enable them to transition seamlessly into the eventual regulatory framework under the new Healthcare Services Act ("HCSA"), which is intended to replace the PHCMA in 2019.

Amongst the four new joiners, MyDoc and Doctor Anywhere offer telemedicine services, while Speedoc offers mobile medicine (house call) services. MaNaDr provides both mobile medicine services and telemedicine services.

MOH has noted the key role that telemedicine is likely to play in Singapore's healthcare industry, given the improved convenience and accessibility to medical support that such services can offer. For example, the telemedicine service provided by Doctor Anywhere enables patients to consult a doctor or a healthcare professional via video calls on a mobile application.

MOH has also noted the enhanced accessibility that mobile medicine would provide, particularly for patients who are unable to attend a hospital or clinic. For example, the mobile application developed by Speedoc enables users to request a house call to any location, where the attending doctor can diagnose the patient's condition and prescribe medicine if needed.

The regulatory sandbox will exist until these telemedicine service providers can obtain an official license under the HCSA when it comes into force.

More information about the MOH's telemedicine sandbox can be found in MOH's web page [here](#).



## 10 Clinics Suspended from Community Health Assist Scheme ("CHAS") Due To Severe Non-Compliance

Following a series of audits conducted by MOH, 10 clinics were recently investigated for severe non-compliance, and have been suspended from participation in CHAS. With effect from 23 October 2018, treatment provided by these clinics will no longer be covered by CHAS subsidies, although they will still be allowed to provide medical treatment while suspended.

CHAS is a scheme introduced by the Singapore Government in 2012 to provide subsidies for medical and dental care, particularly for Singapore citizens who are from lower to middle income households, and/or from the Pioneer Generation.

The clinics, which all belong to the Access Medical Group, had made numerous non-compliant CHAS claims. For instance, claims made for patient visits or chronic conditions were submitted without any relevant supporting documentation, thereby creating doubts as to whether all of the treatments were actually provided.

In their statement, MOH highlighted the Singapore Medical Council's Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines ("**ECEG**"), which state that doctors must not abuse the doctor-patient relationship for personal gain, as provided under Paragraph C12(9). Further, all doctors should act in the best interests of their patients (in accordance with Paragraph B1), and maintain the highest standards of professional practice and conduct.

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MOH also highlighted its practice of conducting extensive monitoring of claims and emphasized the firm stance it takes towards non-compliant CHAS claims.

The matter has also been referred to the police, who will be investigating the clinics for suspected cheating, and also to the Singapore Medical Council for further investigation of the doctors involved in the claims.

More information can be found in MOH's press release [here](#).