

## · ARTWARDS ·

at National University Hospital

### Introduction

At the National University Hospital, volunteers play an important role in providing patients the emotional and social support during their recovery process. Our volunteers come from all walks of life to share their time, skills and resources selflessly with our patients and their families, and with fellow volunteers.

In 2013, NUH collaborated with Artwards, an initiative by a group of professional artists to reach out to both children and adult patients in the wards.

### Motivation

Artwards provides patients the opportunity and platform to engage in arts through various creative expressions to provide temporary relief and distraction from their illnesses and stay in the hospital. Also, such creative interaction with the patients enables volunteers to reach out and connect to the greater community.

### Methodology

Four forms of art expressions namely visual arts, dance, theatre and storytelling were developed. Led by artist mentors, 20 workshops were conducted by volunteers from November 2013 to January 2014. With guidance and encouragement from volunteers, patients created art works and shared their stories and experiences. This culminated in a public exhibition in February 2014 to showcase the works done by patients, extending the reach beyond the wards.

### Conclusion

Art is an activity that both the young and old can experience at their own pace and comfort level. Each expression is unique. It provides opportunities for self-discovery, relieves loneliness and pain, and creates meaningful interaction. Artwards has since returned to NUH to bring joy and self-discovery to more patients and caregivers.

### Results

Artwards received positive responses from patients, caregivers and volunteers.

*"Thank you for making me happy, I have been sad for a long time. After my husband passed away I couldn't forget him, but watching all of you, I feel so happy. I am so happy..."* - Mdm Lim, patient

*"The art itself is fun. I realise that although you may not be an artist, when you just go ahead and fill that particular picture with colours, it actually creates a sense of fun...takes away the constant thought on your illness..."* - Luci, patient

*"It helped me be more calm. At peace with myself. There were so many things on my mind and the painting took it all away..."* - Jacintha, caregiver

*"Performing for them...affirmed my reason to dance, to share the joy it brings to others...the most heart-warming part was talking to the patients..."* - Shanice, dance volunteer

*"We...bring a bit of the outside world with us. In return, when we get stories from the patients, our world also expands..."* - Kai Er, playback theatre volunteer

