



A Structured Approach for Communication of COVID-19 Measures within Singapore General Hospital (SGH)

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Introduction

Accurate and timely information dissemination to staff is crucial during a pandemic, as it provides the foundation to facilitate implementation of measures and alleviation of staff's anxiety from rapid overflow of information. This ensures patient and staff safety, and compliance to prevailing national measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic was long-drawn, with frequent changes to national policies as the local situation developed. For nimble and effective management of the pandemic, the national policies required contextualization to SGH's operating environment, followed by dissemination to SGH's workforce, alongside feedback channels between staff and the core management team.

The uncertainties through the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with complex and dynamic national policies, and short turnaround time to implement response measures may be confusing and overwhelming to staff. These factors make communication to SGH's 10,000-strong workforce complicated. Hence, a structured and effective approach had to be undertaken in communicating COVID-19 measures to staff.

Methodology

SGH adopted the 6 principles of World Health Organization's (WHO) Communications Framework^[1] in the development of a structured approach, to enable timely and effective communication of COVID-19 measures with staff throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Credible & Trusted

- Establish a platform comprising hospital management and leaders across departments for crisis management.
- Disseminate up-to-date and accurate information.

Accessible

- Make information available through multiple communication channels.
- Organize information consistently and purposefully to enhance staff's ability to find information.

Relevant

- Contextualize the national policies to SGH's operating environment.
- Improve communication materials based on feedback from staff.

Timely

- Disseminate the important information to staff timely and accurately.
- Escalate urgent information or issues to hospital management for decision-making.

Understandable

- Make use of plain language, visual representations and consistent terminology to convey information to a wide range of staff.

Actionable

- Provide sufficient guidance to enable staff to implement or adhere to latest response measures.

[1] World Health Organization. (2017). WHO Strategic Communication Framework for Effective Communications. Retrieved from https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/communication-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=93aa6138_0

Results

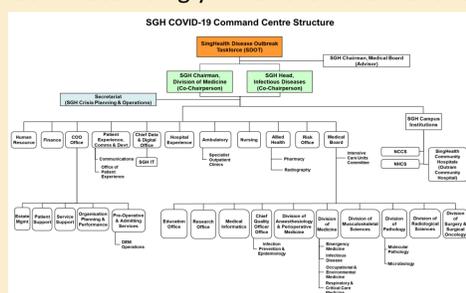
SGH COVID-19 Command Centre

SGH COVID-19 Command Centre served as the nerve centre for the management of the Hospital's response to COVID-19. It comprised SGH Senior Management and leads from departments across the hospital. As the Hospital's designated platform for planning, sharing of updates or issues faced, and discussion of response measures to be implemented, staff could look towards the Command Centre as a credible and trusted source of information.

The frequency of **Command Centre meetings** were scaled according to the local situation. During the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and local community surges, meetings were held daily. The meeting frequency was scaled down accordingly whenever the national's COVID-19 community situation stabilized.

Information required for planning and review of response measures were presented at the meetings for discussion and decision, followed on by communication from the leads to their staff. Examples of measures are:

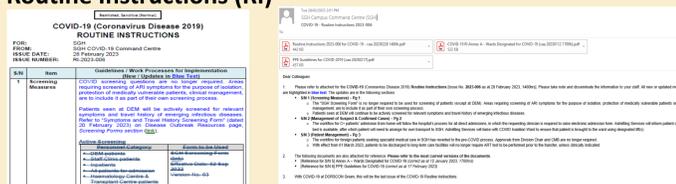
- Opening and closure of isolation wards
- Screening measures and risk stratification



Communication Channels

Multipronged approach was adopted to maximize accessibility of timely information to all staff. The development of resource materials took into account the principles of "Relevant", "Understandable" and "Actionable".

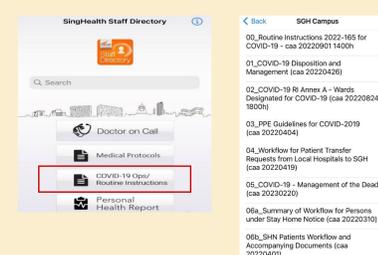
(1) Routine Instructions (RI)



- RI provided a summary of the prevailing measures, with links to supporting documents containing detailed guidelines and workflows.
- Information was tailored to SGH's context, and written in a concise manner for staff, using consistent categories of measures and familiar language.
- Changes were made in a consistent format – updated information were highlighted in blue, while outdated information were strikethrough and highlighted in blue-gray.
- RI was disseminated to all SGH staff via email at 1400hrs daily, scaling down to weekdays subsequently.
- Summary of changes were provided within the RI email.

(2) RI Module on Staff Directory mobile app

- RI module was added to Staff Directory mobile application to enable staff to access critical information on-the-go.
- RI and frequently-used documents were uploaded to RI module, in addition to the DO Resources Infopedia page.



(3) Workflows and Guidelines:

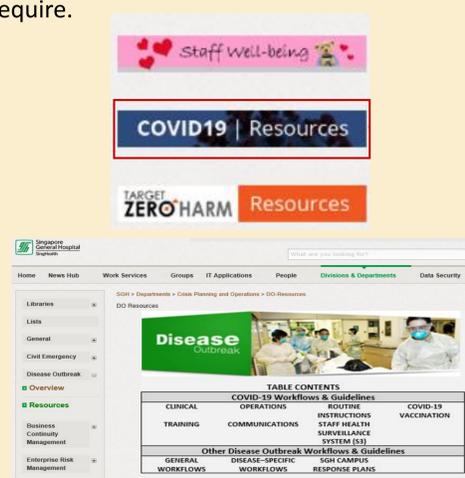
Updated workflows and guidelines to support implementation of response measures for various work areas were put together to guide staff through various work processes and scenarios. Examples include:

- COVID-19 Disposition Guide – for management of persons identified with COVID-19 risk factors through the screening process
- Patient Surveillance Testing Info Kit – for testing regime of patients who require surveillance testing
- Inpatient COVID Guide – for clinical and logistical management of COVID inpatients

Disease Outbreak (DO) Resources Infopedia Page

A designated Intranet site – **DO Resources Infopedia Page**, served as the one-stop repository for COVID-19 resources. The following steps were taken to ensure staff's accessibility to the page and ease of obtaining the documents they require.

- Creation of shortcut button on SGH Infopedia's home page for direct access to the DO Resources page.
- Segmentation of documents into intuitive categories with appropriate navigation at the top of page.
- Arranging documents in accordance to their criticality and frequency of use.
- Stating documents' revision dates on both the Resources Page and within the documents for version control and reference.



Conclusion

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, staff were exposed to a huge amount of COVID-19-related information on a daily basis. It was vital to practice effective communication to help staff navigate through infodemic. The usage of the multiple platforms with a structured and consistent approach in communicating information to SGH's large staff population had contributed greatly to the organisation's ability to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic.