

# SCOPE

LATEST NEWS & EVENTS @ NMRC

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## Events

### Research for a Better Future

NMRC Awards Ceremony and Research Symposium 2024



Group photo of NMRC STaR Investigator Award and CSA recipients with Guest-of-Honour, Director-General of Health, Deputy Secretary (Development) and NMRC Executive Director.

The [NMRC Awards Ceremony and Research Symposium 2024](#) took place on May 23 - 24 at One Farrer Hotel, bringing together around 350 attendees from the healthcare and research communities. The event celebrated outstanding clinician scientists and offered a platform for networking among healthcare leaders, researchers and industry partners.

In his welcome address, NMRC Executive Director Prof Tan Say Beng highlighted NMRC's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the NMRC Office's first year under MOH Holdings' Division of Research and Innovation. Guest-of-Honour, Mr Ng How Yue, Ministry of Health's Permanent Secretary (Services) announced new projects under the NMRC Open Fund-Large Collaborative Grant (OF-LCG).

The awards ceremony recognised 67 outstanding clinician scientists, who received NMRC Talent Awards [e.g. Singapore Translational Research (STaR) Investigator Award and Clinician

Scientist Award (CSA)] under the 2023 grant calls. Following the awards, a series of plenary and concurrent sessions featured esteemed overseas speakers, in particular Prof Sir Peter Horby (University of Oxford), Dr Amy Abernethy (Highlander Health), Prof Uri Gneezy (University of California), and Prof Haibo Wang (Sun Yat-Sen University), along with local experts. Discussions focused on topics like population health research, innovative technologies and strategic partnerships in healthcare.

The event concluded after 1.5 days of vibrant discussions and networking opportunities among the participants and ecosystem partners. The Consortium for Clinical Research and Innovation, Singapore (CRIS), together with its programmes, the Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI) and National Health Innovation Centre Singapore (NHIC) participated onsite with booths to showcase their initiatives, technologies and milestone events.

“The collaboration between scientists and clinician scientists within a multidisciplinary team helps to foster team science to address multi-faceted challenges in healthcare.... Over the years, the LCG has done well in contributing to scientific excellence, building research collaborations, attracting industry partnerships, as well as translating research results into health and economic outcomes.”



Guest-of-Honour,  
Mr Ng How Yue,  
Permanent Secretary  
(Services),  
Ministry of Health

“This year has also seen the NMRC Office come under the umbrella of MOH Holdings. This move strengthens our ability to work closely with public healthcare institutions while still maintaining close links and alignment with Ministry of Health and other Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) stakeholders.”



Prof Tan Say Beng,  
Executive Director,  
NMRC

#### Overseas speakers

From left to right:  
Prof Sir Peter Horby, Dr Amy Abernethy,  
Prof Uri Gneezy and Prof Haibo Wang





# Engaging the Next Generation of Talent

## NMRC Clinician Scientists/Innovators Engagement Sessions with NMRC Executive Director



Top and bottom: NMRC Executive Director speaking to the clinician scientists/innovators invited to the talent engagement sessions.

On 5 July 2024, NMRC Office held 2 talent engagement sessions led by Executive Director Prof Tan Say Beng. These sessions aimed to connect with junior clinician scientists/innovators who are recipients of NMRC Talent Awards [in particular, the NMRC Clinician Innovator Award (CIA), Clinician Scientist Award (CSA), Health Promotion, Preventive Health, Population Health and Health Services Research CSA (HCSA), Transition Award and NMRC Research Training Fellowship]. The goal of the sessions was to better understand the needs of the clinician scientists/innovators, and gather insights to inform future funding strategies, particularly for the upcoming Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) 2030 budget.

Held at MOH Holdings' new office at Elementum, the sessions involved 23 clinician scientists/innovators, including doctors, dentists, allied health professionals, pharmacists and health economists from public healthcare institutions and medical schools. Prof Tan introduced NMRC's funding schemes and discussed how they support research careers. Representatives from the National Health Innovation Centre Singapore (NHIC) and Singapore Biodesign also shared insights into their programmes to further support clinician innovators.

# Ethics Meets Efficiency

## ECOS Streamlines Ethics Review Process

The National Healthcare Group (NHG) Domain Specific Review Board (DSRB) and SingHealth Centralised Institutional Review Board (CIRB) are public sector Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) that play a vital role to ensure rigour in ethics reviews to protect human research subjects in biomedical, translational and clinical research.

To increase efficiency and improve users' overall experience, the NHG Office of Human Research Protection Programme (OHRPP) and SingHealth Office of Research Integrity, Compliance and Ethics (RICE) have co-developed a new IT platform – Ethics and Compliance Online System (ECOS) which was launched on May 10, 2024. ECOS replaces NHG Research Online Administration & Management (ROAM) and SingHealth Integrated System in Healthcare for Research (iSHaRe), and it comes with new features and functionalities.

**ECOS is now live** with several modules including IRB, Minimum Training, Clinical Research Management System (CRMS) and Compliance. Additional modules, such as Monitoring and Audit, will be launched progressively. More information on ECOS can be found on [NHG's](#) and [SingHealth's](#) websites.

### Key Features of ECOS:

ECOS supports research enterprise functions across the entire research lifecycle from study initiation to completion. By providing a one-stop solution for IRBs, institutions and researchers, the system enhances ethics submission process and promotes collaboration among stakeholders.

### Upgraded Experience with ECOS:

- ▶ **Enhanced User Experience:**  
Uses a more intuitive and improved user interface.
- ▶ **Efficiency and Harmonisation:**  
Streamlines IRB processes and workflows.
- ▶ **Expanded Functionalities:**  
Offers a comprehensive suite of tools for submissions and reviews.
- ▶ **Collaboration:**  
Fosters synergies across public healthcare clusters.
- ▶ **Cybersecurity Compliance:**  
Meets the latest data security standards.



From left to right: NHG OHRPP, SingHealth RICE and Synapse teams celebrating their collaborative efforts behind the successful delivery of ECOS.



## Meet the Clinician Scientist

# From Bedside to Breakthroughs

A/Prof Shefaly Shorey on Her Journey in Nursing Research



Dr Shefaly Shorey, an Associate Professor at the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies at the National University of Singapore, is a trailblazer in the field of maternal and child health research. With over 230 peer-reviewed papers and a track record of leadership roles, including Assistant Dean (Administration) and Chair for the Southeast and East Asian Nursing Education and Research Network, A/Prof Shorey's work spans 4 key areas: (1) Enhancing maternal and child health support; (2) Promoting paternal health and well-being; (3) Innovating healthcare education and training; and (4) Improving healthcare service delivery. In this interview, she shares her journey, motivations and insights into her ground-breaking research.

**Q What motivated you to pursue a career in nursing and midwifery research?**

I was inspired by the care my grandmother received from nurses during her battle with cancer. After transitioning from teaching to nursing, I specialised in midwifery to better support new parents, as their unmet needs in the postnatal wards resonated with me. My early research led to significant changes, such as eliminating routine nasopharyngeal suctioning for newborns at the National University Hospital. Supporting parents has always been my passion; I have worked with agencies like the Ministry of Social and Family Development to develop parenting resources.

**Q Can you tell us about the SMART project?**

The SMART (or Supporting at-risk Mothers across the perinatal period: A Randomised controlled Trial) project, funded under the NMRC Health Promotion, Preventive Health, Population Health and Health Services Research Clinician Scientist Award (HCSA) – Senior Investigator category, looks at developing a mobile health app aimed at supporting vulnerable mothers during the perinatal period. It provides expert advice, peer support and other resources for psychosocially disadvantaged mothers. This project builds on my earlier work with the Supportive Parenting App, which identified a need for more support for mothers at risk of depression. We are currently recruiting participants and collecting data to evaluate the intervention.

**Q What challenges have you faced in your nursing and research journey?**

Balancing clinical work, and research was difficult in the beginning of my career, but I managed through time management and support from colleagues and mentors. Another challenge was collaborating with multidisciplinary teams across institutions, which required strong communication and leadership skills. As a working mother, balancing family with work was also challenging, but flexibility and open communication helped me manage these demands.

**Q What are your future research plans?**

I am currently exploring ways to better engage fathers and improve healthcare service delivery, especially using telehealth. My experience during COVID-19 highlighted the potential of innovative care models like telehealth. I also plan to improve flexible working models to address workforce constraints and enhance maternity care.

**Q What advice do you have for nurses interested in research?**

Nursing research plays a crucial role in shaping healthcare systems and improving patient outcomes. I encourage nurses to get involved in small research projects within their clinical settings. Research is not just for those with advanced degrees; any nurse can contribute by collecting data or analysing patient feedback. Mentorship and interdisciplinary collaboration are also key to success. I strongly believe that engaging in research enhances critical thinking, analytical skills, and provides professional enrichment, empowering nurses to make meaningful contributions to advancing healthcare practices.

A/Prof Shorey with new parents.

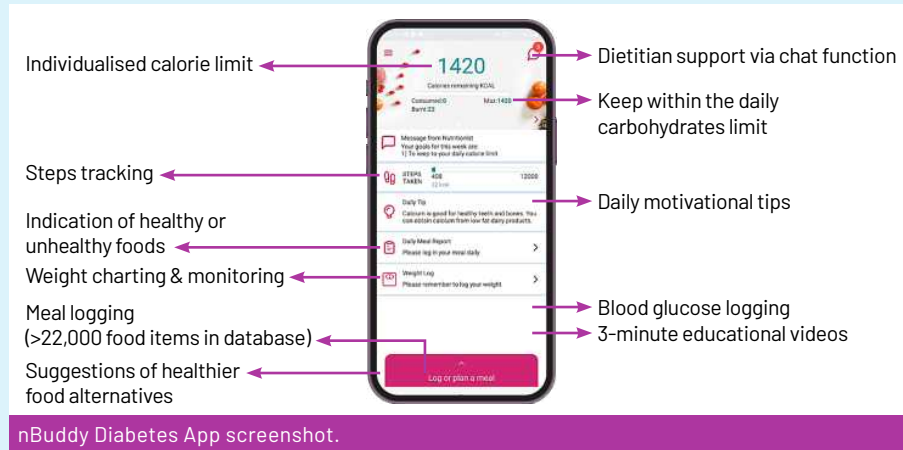




## Research Highlights

# App-solutely Life-Changing: The D'LITE Approach to Diabetes

Interview with Dr Lim Su Lin, Principal Investigator of the D'LITE Study



nBuddy Diabetes App screenshot.

In a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, the D'LITE (Diabetes Lifestyle Intervention using Technology Empowerment) Study, funded under the NMRC Health Services Research Grant (HSRG), stands out as an example of how technology can be used to significantly improve clinical outcomes.

Led by Dr Lim Su Lin, the project has harnessed the power of mobile technology to tackle one of Singapore's most pressing health issues: diabetes. In an interview, Dr Lim shared her passion and insights on the development and impact of this study.

Dr Lim, a dietitian with over 30 years of experience, has long been committed to preventing the dire consequences of poorly managed diabetes. "In my early years, I saw many patients with diabetes progressing to kidney failure. It tugged at my heartstrings because it is completely avoidable," she recalled. This experience fuelled her drive to develop a proactive solution that could empower patients to intervene early and address the root causes of diabetes complications.

The D'LITE study was born out of necessity. Traditional lifestyle interventions, while effective, often encountered logistical challenges such as travel and cost, making consistent patient engagement difficult. Mobile technology became a promising avenue, since almost everyone had a smart phone. The study centred on the use of the nBuddy Diabetes app, which aimed to deliver a culturally contextualised dietary intervention, promote weight loss, and improve glycaemic control. The nBuddy Diabetes app builds on the nBuddy app which was originally developed for people with overweight issues.

One of the app's key features is its ability to provide dietary coaching tailored to local food preferences. "A lot of foreign apps were not suitable because they did not account for our local culture," said Dr Lim. nBuddy Diabetes bridges this gap by offering meal suggestions from Singapore's diverse food selection while remaining culturally sensitive, making it relatable and easy for all to use. The app also tracks user progress, including calorie intake, physical activity, and even blood glucose levels.

Dr Lim emphasised the importance of personalisation and frequent connection with healthcare providers, which the app facilitates. "It is not just about seeing a dietitian every 3 months," she explained. The app also allows for live chats, which enables healthcare professionals to nudge patients towards positive behavioural changes in real time.

The results of the D'LITE study have been encouraging. Users of the nBuddy Diabetes app were found to be more likely to achieve the clinically-significant 5% weight loss, improve blood glucose levels, and even reduce their reliance on diabetes medication. "In fact, 24% of participants had to go back to their doctors to reduce their diabetes medication," said Dr Lim.

The success of the D'LITE study has paved the way for further developments. Dr Lim has since launched the nBuddy Keto app to accompany patients in their weight loss journey.

For Dr Lim, the real joy comes from seeing the positive impact on many more patients' lives. "We were ahead of our



**In my early years, I saw many patients with diabetes progressing to kidney failure. It tugged at my heartstrings because it is completely avoidable."**

**Dr Lim Su Lin,  
Chief Dietitian and  
Head of Therapeutics,  
National University Hospital**



From left to right: The study team comprising Dr Khoo Chin Meng, Dr Lim Su Lin and Ms Melissa Tay.

time," she said. "When COVID-19 hit, we didn't reduce the number of patients we worked with.... These apps have benefitted a lot of people and continue to benefit a lot of people. These apps have been downloaded more than 22,000 times collectively, and we have reached out to more than a few thousand people on the nBuddy app programme now."