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Record 3,343 service awards given to healthcare workers

Dr Suzanna co-founded a clinic at KKH which provides care and support for teenage mothers. She won the Superstar award at yesterday's annual Singapore Health Quality Service Award ceremony. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

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At Dr Suzanna Sulaiman's special clinic, pregnant teenagers can get medical attention in a supportive environment. They can also get advice on pregnancy care, sex education and counselling .

Dr Suzanna, 44, who co-founded the clinic in KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) in 2008, wanted to give mothers under the age of 21 better antenatal care, involve their families in the pregnancy and make sure the young mothers return to work or school afterwards. For developing this clinic and other contributions, she won the Superstar award in the clinician category at yesterday's annual Singapore Health Quality Service Award ceremony.

This year, a record 3,343 awards were given to healthcare professionals who delivered good service to patients. The winners came from both public and private organisations, hospitals and agencies in the intermediate and long-term care sector.

"Even as we increase capacity, we must also continue to improve the quality of our care delivery," said the Senior Minister of State for Health as well as Environment and Water Resources, Dr Amy Khor, at the awards presentation at NUS' University Cultural Centre.

"Most importantly, we must do more to design care around patients, and make care more person-centred, rather than episodic and fragmented," she said.

Dr Suzanna's clinic, for example, has specific staff assigned to each patient to familiarise the young mothers with their doctors and nurses, making them more open to advice and to returning for further sessions.

"When you're young, you tend not to want to open up very much, but we cater to that," she said.

Another example of patient-centred care is training nurses to help patients with tracheostomy (breathing tubes) learn to breathe normally again, a process that was once done only by surgeons and, thus, involved a long and uncomfortable wait.

The idea was developed by a team from Ren Ci Community Hospital, and won a Special Mention award.

The team plans to make the programme available nationally to patients with long-term tracheostomy by sharing their experience with other institutions.

Now in its sixth year, the Singapore Health Quality Service Award is the first and largest here for healthcare quality. Other winners this year included the National Kidney Foundation, St Luke's Eldercare and Orange Valley Nursing Homes.

Dr Suzanna said: "This award is a motivation for doctors like me. It helps us realise that we're on the right track. Many of us come to work and feel that we're not doing enough, but once you receive an award like this, you realise that people do value what you do. It motivates me even further."