



It is important to help cancer patients cope with their psychological needs while providing the best medical care, says Dr Ong.
PHOTO: NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE

Customer Service — Healthcare (Special Mention)

A comforting hand

Breast cancer specialist Dr Ong Kong Wee tries to make his patients' visits a positive experience in the healing process

by grace ma

SURGICAL oncologist Dr Ong Kong Wee's job goes beyond just treating cancer patients. Sometimes he takes care of their families too.

The 38-year-old specialist in breast cancer at the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) once helped a woman on social support to find a welfare home for her bedridden husband and intellectually disabled son so that she could focus on receiving treatment.

Being able to help socially disadvantaged patients like these is one of the reasons why Dr Ong finds his work fulfilling.

Being able to make cancer treatment less traumatic is another.

"I always feel it is important to go the extra mile and make each visit a positive experience for the patients, and replace their fear and anxiety with faith and hope," he says.

In his two years with NCCS, Dr Ong has seen many patients react to their cancer diagnosis with anxiety, fear and despair.

He says: "During this trying time, it is important that I, as their primary physician, help them cope with their psychological needs while providing the best medical care."

Dr Ong is one of four health-care practitioners who were given Special Mention in the Customer Service (Healthcare) category at the inaugural Singapore Experience Awards last evening.

But Dr Ong is modest about the award, preferring to give credit to the team at NCCS.

"There are many doctors here who are my role models in terms of patient care and customer service.

"Nevertheless, it's an honour and I've got all my patients to thank. It reflects that I am doing something right," says Dr Ong, who holds a PhD in tumour immunology and has been in the medical profession for 12 years.

What is more meaningful to Dr Ong is the representation of a public institution in the award category.

He says: "It shows that despite a much heavier patient load, public health-care workers can still provide excellent service to our patients if we put in the effort."