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Serena Wee
CEO
Icon SOC

Icon SOC strengthens cancer care services amidst Singapore's medical tourism bid

Icon SOC CEO Serena Wee expands their oncology services and employs a concierge for foreign patients.

One of the hospitals working to boost Singapore's leadership status in the Southeast Asian cancer care industry is Icon SOC, which is a result of Singapore Oncology Consultants' (SOC) incorporation into Australian cancer care giant Icon Group in 2016. In an interview with *Healthcare Asia*, Icon SOC CEO Serena Wee talks about the expansion of the company's oncology services into haematology and radiation and their innovative medical concierge service that caters to medical tourists that comprise 50% of their patients.

What are the healthcare needs that Icon SOC addresses?

Icon SOC is made up of a prominent and experienced team of cancer specialists, including medical oncologists, haematologists, and radiation oncologists who have trained and worked at cancer centres both in Singapore and abroad. As of September 2018, Icon SOC has seven cancer centres, with outreach clinics in Vietnam and Cambodia.

We provide chemotherapy, haematology (including the treatment of both malignant and non-malignant blood conditions), immunotherapy, radiation oncology services, and pharmacy; as well as clinicians who work with patients to provide a personalised treatment plan based on their individual disease and cultural background.

How do you overcome your challenges as a CEO?

I started with Icon SOC in 2018 as Chief Operating Officer managing the regional portfolio for Icon. During this time, I was able to grow our reach across the ASEAN region and work with teams across Icon SOC in the continual improvement of cancer care.

Having over 25 years' experience in healthcare management, strategic planning and business development within the region, I am familiar with Singapore's healthcare landscape, but there are always challenges. Ensuring you are leading by example for your teams and keeping a positive working environment is a constant part of my job but a rewarding one. As CEO, I want to maintain a balance between being there for my staff and ensuring I am leading the business for growth and meeting goals.

What are the key business milestones for Icon SOC?

In March 2018, Icon Group signed an agreement with Vietnam's National Cancer Hospital (K Hospital) in Hanoi and Military Hospital 175 in Ho Chi Minh City, to develop large-scale cancer care infrastructure, implement an international standard in medical excellence across hospital management, and leverage innovative technologies to deliver remote care. We are currently in the process of finalising these projects, which will see the company's footprint expand beyond Singapore.

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model that connects patients to cancer treatments and clinicians in Singapore, whilst enabling them to access local medical relationships to manage ongoing health, side effects and follow-up appointments throughout their treatment and beyond.

Most recently, we announced the further expansion of Icon SOC's oncology service into the field of haematology and radiation oncology. The integrated model will ensure a close working relationship and collaborative decision making between the different specialists involved in a patient's treatment and provide seamless care throughout the patient journey.

What is Singapore's status in the cancer care industry?

In Singapore alone, 15 people die from cancer every day. There is also an acute need for cancer care in Singapore. With our ageing population, the cancer burden will significantly increase over the coming years.

Cancer is currently the leading cause of death in Singapore, accounting for 29.1% of deaths in 2017. As the risk of cancer increases with age, the number of people being diagnosed and living with cancer is likely to continue to rise.

Singapore is growing as a regional leader in cancer care with patients from Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Malaysia frequently seeking services. 50% of patients treated at Icon SOC clinics come from across Asia and the Middle East via medical tourism. We have a dedicated medical concierge service that supports patients seeking to travel for treatment and care in a culturally sensitive and personal manner.

Patients are supported by a companion who will assist from the initial point of contact up to treatment and follow-ups. We provide assistance with accommodation and medical appointments and employ a shared-care model that connects patients to cancer treatments and clinicians, whilst enabling them to access local medical relationships to manage ongoing health and follow-up appointments.

Any new initiatives that other hospitals can emulate?

We provide patients with evidence-based cancer treatments, give them access to clinical trials, whilst supporting and caring for patients and their families. Continued investment in treatment techniques and technology and involvement in clinical trials for new drug treatments allow people to have a greater choice when planning and accessing the care they need.

We also recently installed more "cold cap" technology as an option for combatting chemotherapy-induced hair loss. This technology aims to help patients retain more of their hair during chemotherapy treatment. All Icon SOC clinics are equipped with this technology and it is available to patients as clinically appropriate.



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