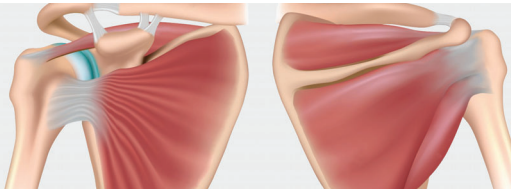


CANCERFOCUS



1 Managing Pain Symptoms for Women: Breast Cancer



4 Five Tips for Good Emotional Health While Living With Cancer



6 Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer



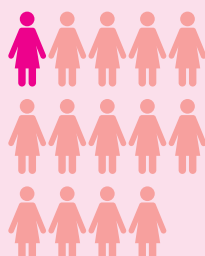
8 Finding His Voice

MANAGING PAIN SYMPTOMS FOR WOMEN: BREAST CANCER

Aw Hui Zhen

Physiotherapist
Singapore Cancer Society

In Singapore, Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the female population. It is estimated that the lifetime risk for women of developing breast cancer is 1 in 14 women by 75 years old (Singapore Cancer Registry 2015). Although overall survival rates have improved drastically over the past decade, the potential sequelae of breast cancer treatments are often poorly recognised and can lead to significant impairments and diminished quality of life. Studies suggest that approximately 60% of breast cancer survivors experience shoulder pain and 67% have decreased strength in their upper body. The burden of these complications on the healthcare system has also been shown to be significant.

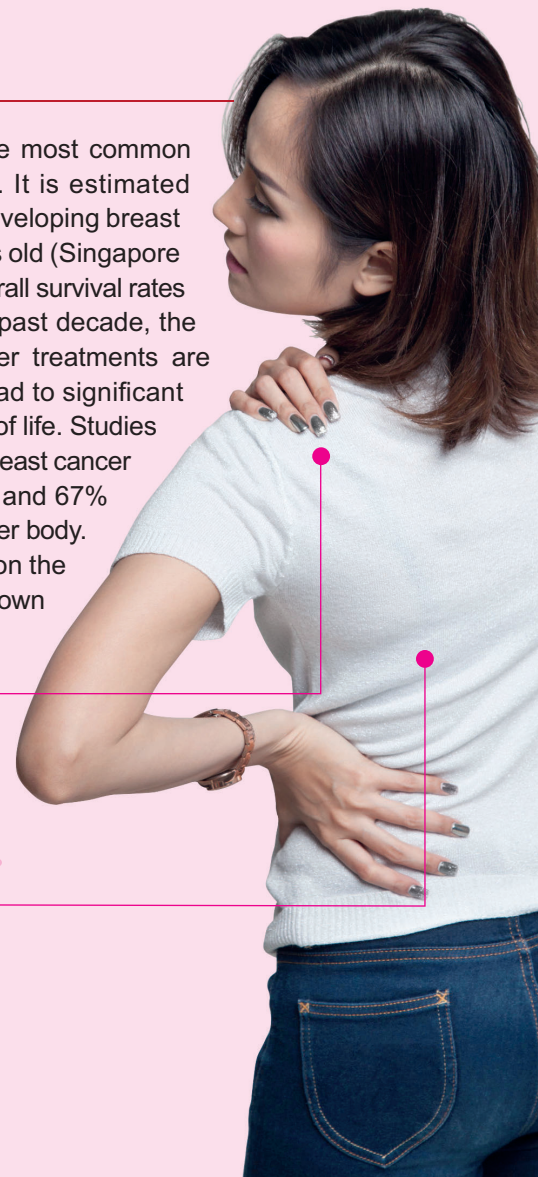


Lifetime risk of developing breast cancer:

1-14
WOMEN

60%
experience shoulder pain

67%
decreased strength in upper body



Some of the most common impairments are musculo-skeletal in nature and include conditions like axillary web syndrome (AWS) and frozen shoulder (FS). AWS presents as palpable tight cords of tissue surrounding the axillary area and may extend down to the medial aspect of upper extremity to as far as base of the thumb. Frozen shoulder is characterized by painful restriction of passive and active movement of the shoulder. These conditions lead to both pain and reduced range of movement of shoulder, causing loss of function, prolonged duration of leave of absence from work.

Risk factors for shoulder pain:

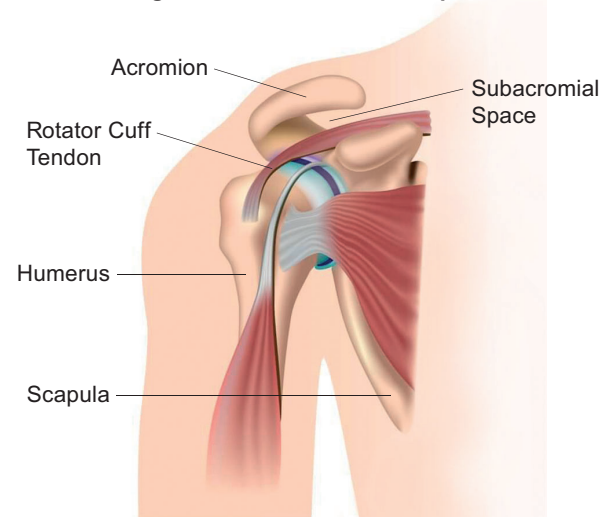
- Extensive surgery involving axilla lymph node dissection
- Radiotherapy
- Total mastectomy
- Existing cancer related arm lymphedema
- Existing comorbidities such as diabetes, thyroid disorders or shoulder injuries

Importance of Shoulder Muscles (Rotator Cuff)

Postsurgical pain and radiation therapy to chest area may result in scar tissues formation. Protective posturing causes shortening of the pectoralis muscles, forward protraction of the shoulder.

In severe cases, narrowing of the subacromial space (Figure 1) in which the rotator cuff tendons run through may lead to impingement, inflammation and painful arm movements. Simple stretching and strengthening exercises for shoulder can help to reduce pain and improve shoulder range of motion.

Figure 1: The Shoulder Complex

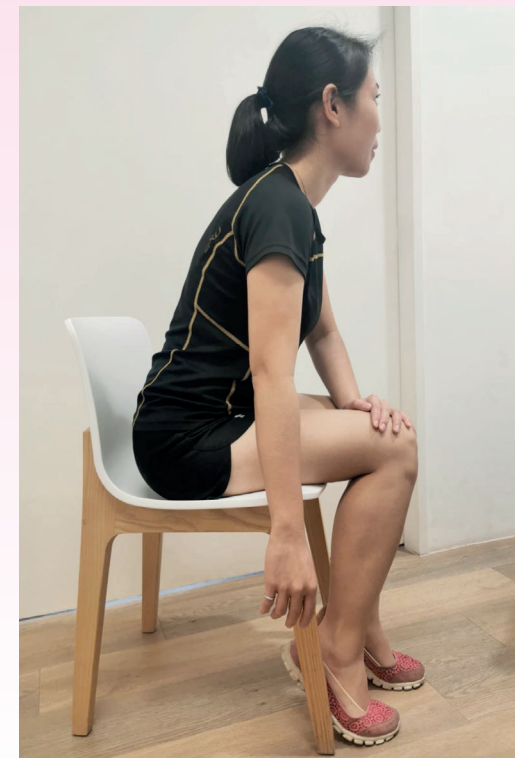


Simple Stretches to Manage Pain Symptoms:

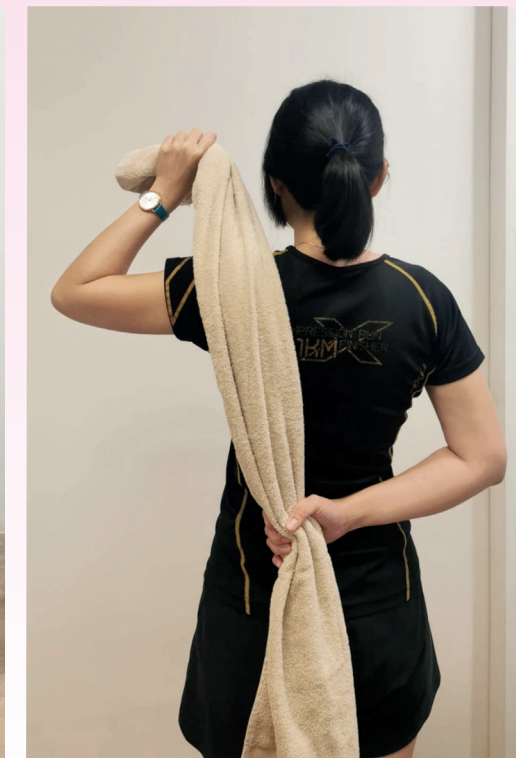
Pendulum stretch Perform in standing or sitting. Lean over slightly allowing your affected arm to hang down. Swing your arm gently in small circle in clockwise and anticlockwise direction. Perform 10-15 times, thrice a day. Ensure the 'stretching pain' is within your tolerable limit.

Towel stretch Grasp a piece of shower towel with both hands behind your back. Hold in the towel in a horizontal position and slowly use your good arm to pull the affected arm in an upward direction. Hold that stretched position for 15-20 seconds. Perform 5-10 times a day and ensure 'stretching pain' is within your comfortable tolerable limit.

'Spider' Walk Stand three quarters of one arm length away from wall. Slowly elevate affected arm toward the wall, fingers slowly crawl up the wall, spider-like until you have raised your arm to the level as far as you feel the 'stretching pain' within your comfortable tolerable limit. Hold that stretched position for 15-20 seconds. Perform 5-10 times a day.



Pendulum Stretch



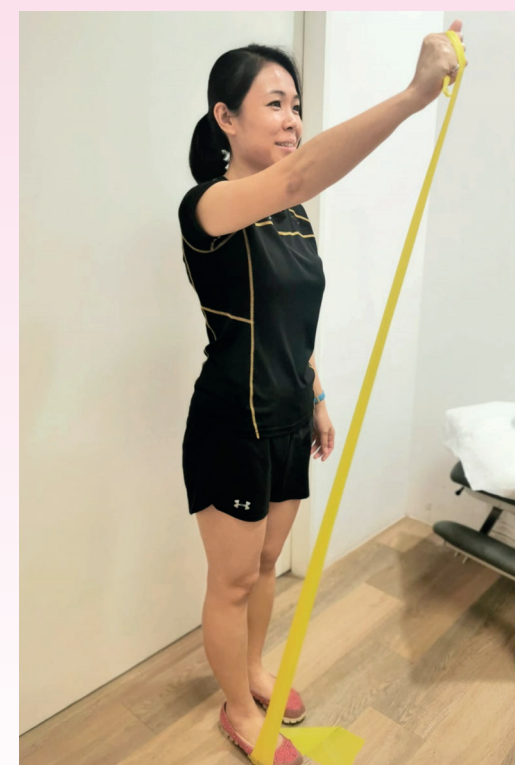
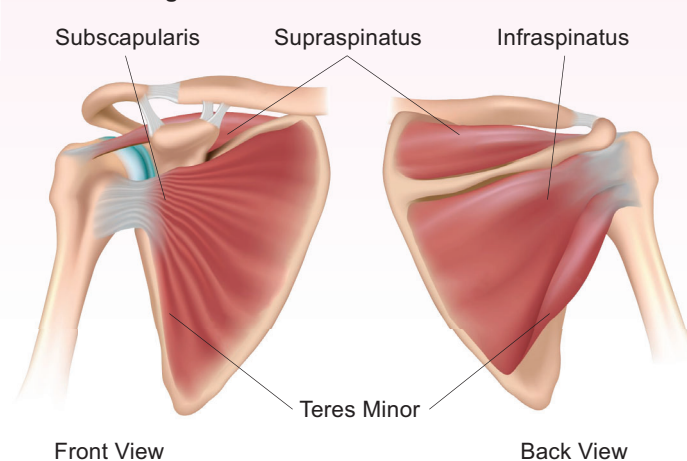
Towel Stretch

Simple Strengthening Exercises:

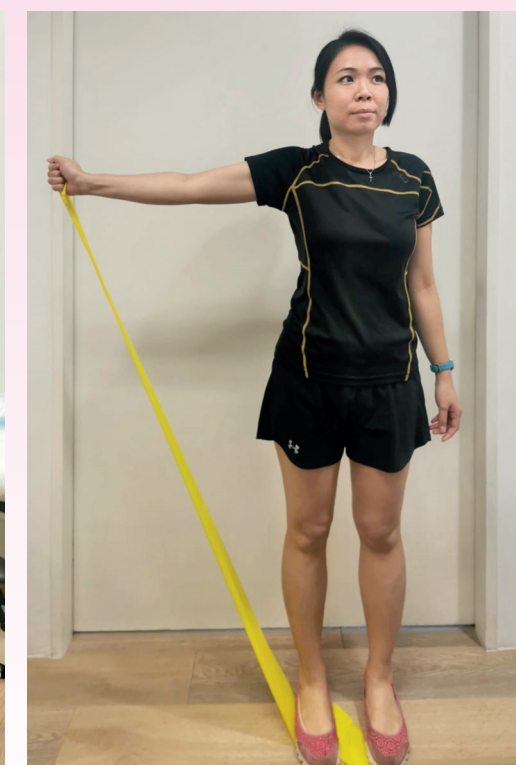
Shoulder Blade Squeeze With your arms by your side, squeeze your shoulder blades together. Ensure your shoulders are not raised as you are squeezing. Hold for 10 seconds, repeat for 5 times a day.

Rotator Cuff Exercises Using Resistance Band Working your rotator cuff muscles (Figure 2) using the lightest band in various shoulder direction – flexion, abduction and external rotation. Perform each exercise for 8-10 times, 2 sets within your comfortable limit.

Figure 2: Muscle of the Rotator Cuff



Flexion



Abduction



External Rotation

Visit our Oncology Physiotherapists at Singapore Cancer Society Rehabilitation Centre for a more customised exercise prescription for axillary web syndrome or frozen shoulder. For more information call **1800-727-3333**.

FIVE TIPS FOR GOOD EMOTIONAL HEALTH WHILE LIVING WITH CANCER

Dr Joan Khng

Senior Social Worker, Singapore Cancer Society

Individuals commonly experience overwhelming emotions when they are told they have cancer. The cancer experience can disrupt one's lifestyle. Having cancer can bring multiple losses to health, confidence, employment, independence, relationships and appearance or physical functioning. Here are five tips to improve or maintain good emotional health while living with cancer.



1 It is important to notice, acknowledge and accept one's feelings.

Cancer patients need not force themselves to be upbeat or pretend that everything is okay when it is not. When they are able to name and acknowledge their emotions, it can make their emotions less intense. It can give them the opportunity to pause, reflect and choose what to do with them.



2 It is helpful to find an emotional outlet to release strong feelings like sadness and anger.

One should find an emotional outlet to release these feelings. Some cancer patients find it helpful to be able to release their tension by talking to someone they trust, such as family members and friends. Others find help in cancer support groups, or in getting counselling. Some may process their feelings through writing in their journal, or by reflecting on their feelings. Few others would prefer to exercise or go for walks.



3 It is important to acknowledge that life is uncertain and not everything is within our control.

The uncertainty successful treatments, cancer relapse, or when to resume one's life after cancer can be unsettling and leave cancer patients feeling worried and anxious. Coupled with feelings of boredom at home, cancer patients may find themselves in low mood. To manage worries and anxiety, it is important for cancer patients to try to recognise that there are situations beyond their control. Although it may be challenging, many individuals find it helpful to let go of what is beyond their control. Cancer patients can remind themselves that they have the power to choose how they want to cope with or respond to that situation. For things that are within their control, they can focus on taking charge in making choices to improve their lives.



4 It is helpful to focus on the present and practice gratitude.

Cancer patients can find activities that they can enjoy in the present, such as spending time with loved ones, listening to music, gardening, baking and/or painting. They can get involved in activities to occupy their time meaningfully, so that they do not dwell on their negative emotions. Often we torment ourselves by worrying about the future or dwelling on past regrets and forget that we are living in the present. While it is not possible to get rid of negative emotions, living life one moment at a time allows us to be more mindful of what we have presently that we can be thankful about in spite of our challenges. When we are able to possess this attitude of gratitude, it will help reduce our negative emotions.



5 It is important not to feel ashamed in seeking help.

Being able to seek help is a sign of strength, not weakness. One of the places that cancer patients can seek help is Singapore Cancer Society (SCS). SCS has developed a suite of comprehensive services for cancer patients. Beginning with casework and counselling, cancer patients are able to deal with their emotional concerns as well as navigate various community resources. An art therapist is also available to help cancer survivors express thoughts that are difficult to communicate with words. SCS also has a clinical sexologist who can assist cancer patients and their partners with sexual health related issues. Our group of patient ambassadors (formerly cancer survivors) ensures no cancer survivor walk alone. Ambassadors provide that peer support to patients as befrienders. There are also support groups for cancer patients to connect with one another through participation in enriching talks or meaningful activities.

To sign up for casework and counselling, please email us at cs_pss@singaporecancersociety.org.sg. For SCS support groups, please email us at supportgroup@singaporecancersociety.org.sg. For more information call: 1800-727-3333.

HEREDITARY BREAST AND OVARIAN CANCER

Dr Samuel Ow

Consultant, Department of Haematology – Oncology
National University Cancer Institute, Singapore
Committee Member, Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign
Singapore Cancer Society

Breast cancer is the most common cancer amongst women in Singapore, but only 5-10% of breast cancers are considered hereditary. Majority of breast cancers are considered sporadic due to ageing, lifestyle and environmental exposures, which is why breast cancer screening is recommended for all women from the age of 40 in Singapore.

However, it is important to consider the possibility of a hereditary cause of breast cancer, which is most commonly caused by mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes. These are cancer protection genes which are present in everyone from birth. We all have 2 copies of each gene – one from our father, and one from our mother. If a person is born with a faulty copy (also known as a mutation) of the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer increases significantly, which is why we term this Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Syndrome (HBOC). We now also know that the risk for other cancers such as Male Breast Cancer, Prostate Cancer and Pancreatic Cancer is also increased in HBOC. The faulty copy of the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene can be passed down from generation to generation. If a parent carries a faulty copy of the gene, each child will have a 50% chance of inheriting it.



If a person is born with a faulty copy (also known as a mutation) of the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer increases significantly.

When Should We Suspect HBOC?

We would consider the possibility of HBOC if there is a personal and/or family history of breast and ovarian cancers, or related cancers. (Some examples are listed in Table 1) Understanding the family history from both paternal and maternal sides will help your doctor decide if you should be evaluated for HBOC.

Table 1*

Personal History of	Family History** of
Breast cancer at age 45 or younger	Multiple relatives with breast cancers
Triple negative breast cancer	Breast, ovarian, pancreas and/or prostate cancers
Breast cancer in both breasts	Individuals with known BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations
Ovarian cancer, particularly the high grade serious type	
Both breast and ovarian cancers	
Male breast cancer	

* More details can be obtained in relevant guidelines e.g. National Comprehensive Cancer Network (nccn.org)

** Refers to either maternal family history or paternal family history, not a combination of both.

How Do We Confirm the Diagnosis of HBOC?

HBOC can be confirmed through genetic testing in the form of a blood test or a mouth swab. Besides mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2, there are other genes which can also increase the risk of developing breast and other cancers e.g. TP53, PALB2, and



CHEK2. We now can test for multiple genes using a single test, but this should be discussed with a cancer genetics counsellor or a doctor specialising in this area.

How Will Genetic Testing Help Me?

Genetic testing can be very helpful for patients suspected to have HBOC, and can influence their cancer treatment and cancer screening strategies.

It helps one:

- Understand their potential risk of cancer
- Understand why they and/or their family members developed cancer
- Take steps for early cancer screening and risk reduction
- Understand if their family members need to undergo genetic testing if a mutation is found

In certain cases, genetic testing is advised to help the doctor personalise a patient's cancer treatment, particularly with an approved form of therapy known as PARP inhibitors.

However, genetic testing can also be associated with negative implications, particularly:

- Cost concerns
- Stress over the genetic test results
- Fear of discrimination
- Unhappiness amongst family members

Hence it is important that one undergoes genetic counselling on the pros and cons before proceeding with genetic testing. For more information, please visit: <https://www.ncis.com.sg/Our-Services/Specialties/Pages/Cancer-Risk-Assessment-and-Genetics-Clinic.aspx> or contact CancerApptLine@nuhs.edu.sg.

Established in 1964, Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), a voluntary welfare organisation has positively impacted the lives of those affected by cancer.

It actively promotes cancer awareness in the community and offers cancer screening services [Mammogram, Pap test, Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)], welfare assistance, community based cancer rehabilitation, cancer support group activities and hospice care to support cancer patients and families.

OUR VISION

To be Singapore's leading charity in the fight for a cancer-free community.

OUR MISSION

To Minimise Cancer and Maximise Lives through effective programmes.

OUR PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

1. Financial Assistance

- Cancer Treatment Fund (Cancer treatment subsidies for cancer patients)
- Cancer Care Fund
- Welfare Aid for needy cancer patients

2. Free Cancer Screening

- Pap test and HPV test (For Cervical cancer)
- Health Education: Breast Self-Examination
- Mammogram screening (For Breast cancer; CHAS Card Holders)
- Faecal Immunochemical Test [FIT] (For Colorectal cancer)

3. Public Education

- Cancer awareness campaigns
- Cancer-related talks and forums
- Cancer information (via website & telephone service)

4. Cancer Support

- Cancer support groups and activities
- Psycho-social services

5. Cancer Rehabilitation

- Integrated, person-centred holistic approach with aim to return to normalcy

6. Hospice Care Services

- Medical and psycho-social care for terminally ill cancer patients

7. Cancer Research

- Cancer research grants and awards

8. Volunteers Programme

- Volunteering opportunities to suit people with different interests and skills

CONTACT US

Singapore Cancer Society

15 Enggor Street, #04-01 Realty Centre
Singapore 079716

☎ 1800-727-3333 ☎ 6221 9575

🌐 <https://www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg/>

CONTRIBUTORS

Aw Hui Zhen
Dr Joan Khng
Dr Samuel Ow

EDITORIAL TEAM

Kumudha Panneerchelvam

FINDING HIS VOICE

Imagine being told that you will not be able to speak normally anymore and that your days are numbered. Such was the predicament of Mr Mohandas', when he went to see the doctor for what he assumed was just a sore throat. His world came crashing down when he found out he had a huge tumour in his throat.



Mr Mohan was a heavy smoker for 42 years, almost finishing 2 packets of cigarettes per day. In 2012, he started coughing very badly and collapsed one day when he was drinking water. He was rushed to the hospital and was then diagnosed with stage 4 throat cancer. His voice box was removed and a major surgery was done to his neck. He could not speak for nearly 3 years. He lived without a voice.

Staying in a rental flat, Mr Mohan needed assistance to cope with the financial strain caused by cancer. Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) assisted him with cash aid (\$14,040), Cancer Treatment Fund (\$3,000 for Radiotherapy), and on Voice Prosthesis (\$1,125), a device to assist him speak.

Just when he thought he would be alone in the cancer battle, he joined a support group where he found solace meeting members going through the same cancer journey. Today Mr Mohanadas is an active member in the SCS New Voice Club Support Group, which consists of members who have had some form of laryngeal cancer and have undergone surgical treatment or laryngectomy. He went through speech practice sessions conducted by SCS for the support group members. This has helped him regain his ability to communicate with others.

The support group also reaches out to new patients and renders emotional support to members and their families in coping with a 'new voice' after surgery. Speech practice sessions conducted by its members have enabled many to regain their ability to communicate with others. To find out more: <http://bit.ly/SCSnewvoice>.

"Smoking is the regret that will last with me forever. Like most others who start in their teen years, I did it to impress my peers. Little did I know that it will be a painful journey," said Mr Mohan. He regrets about his smoking habit and is thankful for SCS assistance. To give back to the society, the 70 year old, is now sharing his story and advices youth to stop smoking in the Smoke-free talks conducted by SCS. His message to them is *"don't start on something that you will regret later in life"*.

You can do your part for the cancer community. Donate to improve the lives of cancer patients like Mr Mohan:
<https://www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg/get-involved/donate.html>

Support the Cancer Community.
Download any of the apps
and donate generously.
All proceeds will be channeled
to programmes and
services managed by
Singapore Cancer Society.

NO RECEIPTS WILL BE ISSUED
DONATION IS NOT TAX DEDUCTIBLE

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Singapore Cancer Society produces a monthly e-newsletter 'Society News' with updates on SCS happenings, campaigns, events, beneficiaries and fund-raising initiatives. To subscribe: enquiry@singaporecancersociety.org.sg