

Supporting our community during this pandemic

May 14, 2020

Novartis Singapore mobilises its resources and efforts to address the coronavirus pandemic.

The evolving COVID-19 situation has affected the global economy in many ways, including the lives of individuals. In the face of this global health crisis, globally Novartis has quickly mobilised its research and development (R&D) capabilities, medicines, clinical trials expertise and philanthropic aid to address the pandemic.

In Singapore, we have been ramping up our efforts to support our local community and patients in the region during this pandemic.

"We have worked continuously to be Singapore's trusted partner in changing the practice of medicine. With deep roots here and our commitment to the nation, we have a responsibility to support our employees and community to see that we get through this pandemic together."

Kevin Zou, Country President of Novartis Singapore

Ensuring the well-being and safety of our employees

The well-being of our employees is of paramount importance. We take serious precautions to ensure the safety of our over 1,000 employees – working across our manufacturing plants and our local and regional corporate office.

At our manufacturing sites, our associates work in split teams and adhere to strict safe distancing measure to continue producing vital medicines for patients worldwide. As for our office-based associates, we implemented work from home measures early and suspended all work visits to the hospitals and clinics for our field force associates, weeks before the government announced the circuit breaker measures.

To support all employees, we expanded our digital learning resources and gave all associated two additional licenses for their family members to support family learning and home-schooling needs. To help maintain our associates and their families personal health and wellbeing, we provided free access to Tignum X, an app providing digital wellness coaching as well as our 24/7 Employee Assistance Program which provides free professional counselling.

It was also important for Novartis to continue to support our employees working from home. Since the circuit breaker measure was implemented on 7 April 2020, Novartis Singapore has encouraged our employees through various engagement activities such as home delivered surgical masks, virtual team coffee catch up sessions and virtual workouts. These activities help to keep our employees engaged and supported as they navigate the uncertainties of working at home. We will continue to monitor and engage with our employees and assist them in tiding through these difficult times.

Remaining committed to patients and caregivers

The safety and well-being of patients is our primary concern as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a leader in clinical trials, we work closely with the local health authorities and trial sites to ensure patients can safely continue their treatment. This includes trial patients based in neighbouring countries. With the COVID-19 travel restriction ban, Novartis had to appeal for exceptions and make special arrangements for medicines to be couriered to patient's homes and engage physicians in their home countries to assist with trial monitoring.

Providing a helping hand to our community

The COVID-19 situation has impacted the lives of Singaporeans. Vulnerable groups, including those who are facing loss of income or families that are struggling with additional caregiving duties and additional expenses for essential items, face a greater challenge tiding through the crisis.

In the spirit of shared community, Novartis returned **SGD 3.7 million** worth of Job Support Scheme (JSS) – a scheme implemented by the Singapore government to help enterprises retain their local employees during this period of economic uncertainty. The pay out returned amounted to SGD 3.7 million for April 2020 and we have declined to receive future pay outs in May, July and October 2020. This decision follows Novartis global commitment to no retrenchments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our financially strong position allows the support of its associates without government relief through this pandemic. We hope by returning the full JSS pay out, these resources will be re-directed to help more local businesses and communities in need.

Novartis has committed to further support the Singapore community through its **SGD\$200,000** donation to The Courage Fund – a local fund which provides relief to vulnerable individuals and families, including healthcare workers, frontline workers and volunteers, affected by the COVID-19 situation. In a joint-industry effort, Novartis also supported the Singapore Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (SAPI) initiative to donate masks, medical equipment and other essential items to hospitals during this pandemic.

To help our local patient organisation partners, we have extended financial assistance, shared available online tools and leadership support resources to aid their efforts in delivering crucial educational, psycho-social and health navigation support to other patients in need.

Novartis remains responsive to any developments regarding coronavirus and will take all necessary steps to protect our associates, healthcare professionals and patients. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and adapt our measures and community support as the situation evolves.

Source URL: <https://www.novartis.com/sg-en/news/supporting-our-community-during-pandemic>

List of links present in page

- <https://www.novartis.com/sg-en/sg-en/news/supporting-our-community-during-pandemic>
- <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Our-Initiatives/The-Courage-Fund>