



GAME CHANGER #2

**KUAH LING LING**

CLASS OF 2010

## Plugging the Gaps in Home Care

**K**uah Ling Ling's stint as a freelance community nurse opened her eyes to the huge gaps in community care. Even while she was a critical care nurse at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, she noticed the unfathomable stress experienced by primary caregivers of bedridden patients.

"New caregivers who are not well-versed with the patient's needs are often put in a position where they have to make important decisions on his or her behalf. They also have to learn to care for the patient within a short time post-discharge. This can be very overwhelming for many caregivers," says Ms Kuah, who graduated in 2010 from the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies (NUS Nursing) as its second batch of pioneer nurses.

"Caregiver panic is a real phenomenon as many caregivers end up struggling to fulfil the nursing care needs of their loved ones, not having been trained to care for the patients prior to discharge," she adds.

It didn't help that there was a shortage of reason-

ably priced community nursing services at the time, putting a burden on patients from the middle- and low-income households, predominantly homebound elderly who suffer from chronic diseases or have undergone surgery.

From these experiences, as well as her subsequent stint as a full-time nursing staff at the Home Nursing Foundation, Ms Kuah understood why so many patients were readmitted to the hospital shortly after their discharge. These insights sowed the seeds to her eventual plunge into entrepreneurship.

"I knew of nurses around who could provide the care that was needed. I also wondered if there was a way to apply the technologies and innovations that had disrupted both the media and transportation sectors to healthcare, and harness untapped resources," she explains.

While the initial seeds for a disruptor start-up were planted, it was only after she met an ex-public servant, Julian Koo, at the MIT Hacking Medicine@SG 2015 hack-

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athon that the online platform Jaga-Me was conceived.

“Julian and I were both interested in disrupting home care. Our vision was to offer affordable and accessible services to enable patients to get the necessary care,” Ms Kuah explains.

The team eventually won the hackathon, but it was after taking home a \$100,000 grant from the NTUC Future Starter business plan competition, that Jaga-Me went into full swing. Ms Kuah quit her job at the Home Nursing Foundation to run Jaga-Me full-time.

Jaga-Me launched in 2016 to minimise caregiver burnout and give primary caregivers, usually a family member or a foreign domestic helper, access to nursing services in non-emergency situations with the click of a button.

Ms Kuah’s nursing journey led to entrepreneurship, but she remains a nurse at heart. Today, she wears two hats—those of an entrepreneur and a nurse. She supervises nurses and handles cases, leaving the business development and technology aspects of Jaga-Me to Mr Koo and its third co-founder, Aaron Lee.

Today, it partners with the Singapore General Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore Cancer Society, St Luke’s ElderCare and TOUCH Community Services to provide these institutions with a holistic suite of home care and caregiver education services.

Apart from serving its clients well, Jaga-Me’s other priority is to guard the well-being of its stable of over 400 registered nurses who have come on board over the last three years.

“We have to walk the talk and take care of the well-being of the nurses working with us. Nurses per-

form the duty of care at the expense of their well-being and time away from their loved ones. We hope to create an environment in which they feel well-supported,” she says.

“When a staff is sick and cannot perform her duties, we are flexible in providing workarounds. Our nurses are also given breaks because they need time away from their responsibilities at work and at home. It is when they are given avenues to pursue personal growth and professional development that they can render better care for their patients,” she adds.

Ms Kuah and her team continue to focus on upping the competency of Jaga-Me nurses by assessing their training needs and delivering courses and workshops to build up their skills and knowledge. Nurses on the platform are licensed and have at least three years of experience in nursing in an acute medical surgical ward.

Singapore is one of the fastest-ageing societies in the developed world, with one in four citizens aged 65 years and above by 2030. Mindful of the increasing demand for palliative care services, Jaga-Me nurses are equipped with the hard and soft skills of administering prescribed treatment plans as well as providing comfort and assurance to palliative patients and their families, through a collaboration with HCA Hospice Care.

“We will also continue to create awareness of community nursing resources as well as improve communication between the hospitals and our nurses to ensure patients transit well from hospital to home,” Ms Kuah adds.



Kuah Ling Ling believes that with Singapore facing a rapidly ageing population, Jaga-Me is the way to go in leveraging technology to make nursing care more accessible and affordable.

#### Career Highlights

- 2010** Graduated from NUS Nursing with Bachelor of Science (Nursing) (Honours)
- 2010** Started job as Staff Nurse I at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital
- 2014** Became a freelance community nurse
- 2015** Took on job as Staff Nurse at Home Nursing Foundation
- 2015** Won the MIT Hacking Medicine@SG hackathon
- 2015** Won the NTUC Future Starter competition
- 2015** Founded Jaga-Me
- 2016** Official launch of Jaga-Me

#### About Jaga-Me

Jaga-Me is a healthcare online platform launched in 2016 to minimise caregiver burnout and give primary caregivers access to nursing services in non-emergency situations at a click of a button.

Many times in these situations, the patients’ problems are not serious, but caregivers tend to get anxious. They return to the hospital, chalking up healthcare costs when help from a nurse for tasks such as feeding tube insertion, intravenous medication administration and suture removal will usually suffice.

To address this, first-time Jaga-Me users are visited at home by a nurse, who assesses the patient’s condition, helps the caregiver identify care needs of the patient and advises on the medical services and equipment needed for patient care.

Users can also engage the site’s pool of nurses for basic nursing tasks at competitive rates.

Jaga-Me has more than 400 nurses on its platform, including six full-time nurses. All are licensed and have at least three years of experience in an acute medical or surgical ward.