

Thumbs-up for new device

Nursing home nurses
can now crush pills at
the push of a button



by geraldine ling

SIX seconds is what it takes a new machine used by the Sunshine Welfare Action Mission Home (Swami) to crush pills.

The nursing home has been using the First Crush Pill Crusher since September last year and it has helped to improve productivity and streamline processes.

Nurses can also spend more time with the residents under their charge because less time is spent manually crushing pills, says registered nurse Jennifer Quinto, 27.

Previously, Ms Quinto, who joined Swami in 2010, could spend up to 1-1/2 hours per eight-hour shift manually pounding pills using the traditional mortar and pestle method.

The time spent included washing the mortar and pestle with detergent after every pound, and then drying the equipment with a clean cloth to prevent cross-contamination.

Residents who require their medication to be crushed for easier swallowing include those with nasogastric tubes or swallowing difficulties, or dysphagia. Such residents make up about 80 of the home's 242 residents. Some need to take up to 10 pills, four times a day.

A significant amount of force is needed to grind the pills properly, especially for residents who depend on nasogastric tubes, which can get clogged up if pill particles are grinded too coarsely, says Ms Quinto. Painful wrists and palms were often part and parcel of the job.

But that's not the only challenge.

"Sometimes, the sound from the pestle scratching against the mortar can be a bit grating to the ears," she adds.



The pill crusher has improved productivity and streamlined processes and Ms Quinto can spend more quality time interacting with residents.

PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG

Thanks to the battery-operated device, pills can now be transformed — at the quiet push of a button — into a fine powder in seconds.

There is also no need for the nurses to wash the machine after every use because it uses disposable cups.

Breakage problems, say, from dropping the mortar, are also eliminated. But most importantly, residents benefit from the time saved.

She says: "We have more time to make our rounds and interact with the residents. It is quality service."

Following positive feedback from its nurses, the home plans to buy more units of the device. Swami received funding from the Healthcare Productivity Fund to purchase six pill crusher devices last year.

Ms Tan Ai Suan, Swami's nurse manager, says: "If technology can be used to improve our work and the residents' quality of life, then why not?"