



CLOSING THE GAP

Advancing Equitable Access & Innovation in HER2-Positive Breast Cancer Care in Singapore

INTRODUCTION: Strong Foundations, New Imperatives

Singapore has established a robust healthcare infrastructure for breast cancer care. Universal HER2 testing, coordinated care through national cancer centers, and reimbursement for first-line HER2 therapies mark it as a leader in structured oncology systems across Asia. But a world-class foundation is not enough.

Innovation is advancing rapidly, and not all patients are benefiting equally. While the public system ensures access to initial therapies, newer HER2-targeted treatments remain out of reach for many. Screening strategies are outdated, survivorship care is not tailored, and biomarker utilization lags behind the science.

Singapore is classified as Level 3 – Integrated in the Cancer Maturity Framework. To become a Level 4 – Optimised system, Singapore must ensure innovation reaches all patients, regardless of income or age, and adapt policies to meet the specific demands of HER2-positive disease.

KEY CHALLENGES AND POLICY GAPS

1. Screening and Early Detection: Still One-Size-Fits-All

Fact: Over 70% of breast cancer cases in Singapore are detected at early stages, but only 36% of eligible women participate in screening.

Yes, a national mammography program exists... but it is not risk-adapted and misses younger women disproportionately affected by HER2-positive disease.

Policy Priorities:

- Implement risk-based screening incorporating age, family history, & genetic risk factors.
- Expand access to genetic counselling and integrate it into referral pathways.

2. Uneven Access to Next-Generation HER2 Therapies

Fact: While first-line treatments like trastuzumab and pertuzumab are reimbursed, T-DXd and tucatinib are not covered by public schemes.

Yes, public hospitals provide state-of-the-art early treatment... but access to advanced therapies for metastatic disease depends on private means.

Policy Priorities:

- Reimburse second- and third-line HER2 therapies like T-DXd.
- Ensure equitable availability across all institutions and patient groups.



KEY CHALLENGES AND POLICY GAPS

3. Biomarker Testing and Precision Oncology: Potential Untapped

Fact: HER2 testing is universal, but additional biomarkers (e.g. HER2-low status, PIK3CA mutations, BRCA) are underutilized and underfunded.

Yes, biomarker testing is part of clinical guidelines—but real-world implementation is inconsistent and data is fragmented.

Policy Priorities:

- Standardize test turnaround times and reporting procedures.
- Establish a national HER2-positive outcomes and biomarker registry.
- Reimburse genomic assays and expand use of multigene profiling.

4. Reimbursement and HTA: Slow to Adapt

Fact: The Cancer Drug List (CDL) provides subsidized access to 90% of common cancer drugs—but high-cost innovations often face long delays or rejections.

Yes, Singapore's HTA framework ensures cost-effectiveness... but real-world evidence and patient preferences are rarely considered.

Policy Priorities:

- Introduce an accelerated HTA pathway for oncology breakthroughs.
- Include patient-reported outcomes and real-world data in funding decisions.

5. Survivorship and Palliative Care: Not Yet Personalised

Fact: Long-term survival has improved dramatically, with 5-year survival exceeding 80%—yet structured HER2-specific survivorship and early palliative care planning are limited.

Yes, palliative and survivorship care exists... but it's often introduced too late or not tailored to HER2-positive patients' needs.

Policy Priorities:

- Integrate survivorship modules into national guidelines.
- Promote early palliative referral through initiatives like ENABLE-SG.
- Develop decision-support tools to guide recurrence risk monitoring.

CONCLUSION

A Regional Leader with Global Potential

Singapore has built a world-class foundation, but it must evolve to reflect the needs of today's HER2-positive patients. To move from structured to optimised care, Singapore must:

- **Guarantee access to all lines of HER2 therapy.**
- **Expand precision screening and personalised follow-up.**
- **Modernise HTA processes to be innovation- and patient-ready.**

With the infrastructure in place and the ambition to lead, Singapore now has the opportunity to become a model for equitable, forward-looking HER2-positive breast cancer care.

CALL TO ACTION

From Structure to Precision

Singapore's healthcare system is strong... but now is the time to go further. To truly optimise HER2-positive breast cancer care, we must:

- **Ensure equitable access to all HER2 therapies**
- **Modernise HTA processes to reflect innovation and patient needs**
- **Embed personalised approaches into screening, treatment, and follow-up**

The foundation is in place. Let's lead the region with care that is equitable, precise, and patient-driven.

