

## Overview

# THONG NHAT HOSPITAL – DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY AND STRATEGIC ORIENTATION TOWARDS BECOMING VIETNAM’S LEADING HIGH-TECH GERIATRIC CENTER

Le Dinh Thanh

## 1. Thong Nhat Hospital

**ABSTRACT:** Established in 1975, Thong Nhat Hospital carries a historic mission: to provide healthcare for senior government officials and the elderly—individuals who have devoted their lives to national service. Over nearly five decades of development, the hospital has continually expanded its scope, enhanced service quality, and emerged as a leading institution in geriatric medicine in Vietnam. This article not only chronicles the hospital’s developmental journey but also analyzes the rapidly aging demographic landscape in Vietnam and globally. It further outlines a comprehensive strategic development plan through 2035. In response to the emergence of a “super-aged society,” Thong Nhat Hospital aims to become a high-tech national geriatric center of excellence. Its strategic vision is grounded on four foundational pillars: (1) developing a comprehensive and personalized care model that integrates advanced digital technologies and artificial intelligence; (2) cultivating a specialized workforce through nationally standardized and internationally aligned training programs; (3) fostering innovation in scientific research, particularly in disease modeling, interventions to enhance quality of life, and academic publication in geriatric health sciences; and (4) promoting international integration to adopt global best practices and contribute knowledge to the regional and global geriatric health community. These strategic directions are underpinned by the hospital’s robust clinical foundation, multilayered academic collaboration networks, modern hospital governance, and a unified, committed healthcare workforce. This vision reflects the competence, dedication, and strategic foresight of a leading medical institution, contributing to the restructuring of Vietnam’s healthcare system towards a more proactive and humane adaptation to population aging.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Thong Nhat Hospital was established in the context of a newly unified country, with the historic mission of providing healthcare for central leadership officials. Throughout more than 49 years, the hospital has overcome many challenges, transforming strongly to meet the increasingly diverse and complex needs of the people, especially the elderly population. Thong Nhat Hospital today is not only a healthcare provider but also a symbol of humanity, innovation, and pioneering in geriatric medicine.



*Image: Front view of Thong Nhat Hospital. Source: Thong Nhat Hospital*

In the current period, when Vietnam's population aging rate is among the fastest in the world, with the proportion of people over 65 expected to reach over 20% by 2035, the challenge for the healthcare sector is enormous. This is also the time for tertiary healthcare institutions, including Thong Nhat Hospital, to play a strategic core role, pioneering the construction of a healthcare model adapted to an aging society

## 2. THE DISTINCTIVE MODEL "PREVENTION - TREATMENT - LONG-TERM CARE"

### 2.1. Healthcare for Officials - Foundation for Developing Geriatric Models

From a closed treatment model for senior officials, Thong Nhat Hospital has developed a long-term healthcare system, including continuous monitoring - periodic - electronic data connection. Inter-specialty coordination (Internal Medicine, Intensive Care, Rehabilitation, Home Care) creates a strong foundation for a comprehensive, individualized care model, particularly suitable for elderly pathological characteristics such as multiple chronic diseases, geriatric syndromes, and acute complications on chronic backgrounds.

### 2.2. Comprehensive Care - Individualized - Oriented Toward Quality of Life

With the orientation of putting patients at the center, Thong Nhat Hospital implements comprehensive elderly assessment from admission using modern geriatric tools (CGA, SF-36, AFEQT). Each treatment plan is built based on goals of healthy living, independent living, and quality living. The hospital actively implements screening programs for dementia, frailty syndrome, and functional decline risk assessment. Particularly, individualized treatment not only stops at drug selection but also includes nutritional intervention, physical therapy, psychological support, and social care.

## 2.3. Home Care - Community Connection

Recognizing the important role of care outside the hospital, Thong Nhat Hospital builds a professional home care model, where the attending physician leads the plan, coordinating with nurses and social workers. Electronic health records connecting the hospital and primary healthcare system help ensure continuous management, reduce readmission risk, and improve resource utilization efficiency. Additionally, the hospital implements remote consultation through digital platforms, especially useful during pandemic contexts and when mobility is restricted.

## 3. CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEXT OF POPULATION AGING

At Thong Nhat Hospital, an estimated 70% of inpatients and outpatients belong to the  $\geq 60$  age group, reflecting the rapid population aging trend. The biggest current challenge is multiple chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart failure, COPD, cancer... accompanied by dementia, depression, and geriatric syndromes. These conditions require multi-specialty coordination, individualized treatment protocols, and continuous care systems both during and after hospitalization.

Additionally, specialized human resources in geriatrics remain limited, especially at primary healthcare levels. A synchronized strategy is needed from training, professional development to building support policies to attract and retain this workforce.

## 4. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION TO 2035

### 4.1. Infrastructure and High-Tech Development

Thong Nhat Hospital identifies technical infrastructure development as a prerequisite foundation for enhancing professional quality and achieving international standards. The High-tech Geriatric Center will be comprehensively planned with functional zones: specialized inpatient treatment area for the elderly, rehabilitation area integrated with robotic therapy, end-of-life care area following the hospice model, and remote health consultation-management area. Modern equipment such as PET/CT, 3 Tesla MRI, advanced diagnostic-interventional endoscopy systems, DEXA bone density scanners, and remote vital sign monitoring devices will be synchronized on a digital technology platform.

The hospital is one of the pioneering units in applying artificial intelligence (AI) to clinical practice, including: big data analysis, AI-based image diagnosis, complication risk prediction, optimizing individualized treatment for chronic diseases. With experience in early implementation of electronic health record management systems and strong internal databases, Thong Nhat Hospital has great advantages in integrating digital technology into smart hospital operating models

### 4.2. Training and Development of Geriatric Human Resources

The hospital commits to building a team of geriatric specialists meeting national standards and approaching international standards. The Applied Geriatric Training Center, an in-hospital academic model, will take on the role of organizing regular and continuous training for various groups from doctors, nurses to home caregivers. Besides traditional training programs, Thong Nhat Hospital will implement competency-based learning models, combining theoretical learning, clinical simulation, bedside practice, and academic mentoring.

Particularly, the hospital has experience in close cooperation with major medical universities such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Military Medical Academy, Pham Ngoc Thach University of Medicine as well as international cooperation networks (Nagoya University - Japan, Yonsei - Korea, Taiwan...). This is a solid foundation for implementing international bridge training programs, student

exchanges, and organizing bilingual specialized seminars.

### 4.3. Scientific Research Innovation

Thong Nhat Hospital will continue to lead the experimental and clinical research system in geriatrics in Vietnam. The focus is on research on new disease models, interventions to improve function and quality of life, cost-effectiveness evaluation in long-term care and chronic disease management in the elderly. Qualitative research on psychology, society, and cultural-family factors affecting the aging process will also be prioritized.

The Journal of Health and Aging will be developed toward academic specialization, achieving international standards with high citation indexes, serving as a gathering place for original research works, systematic reviews, and practical lessons. To achieve this, the hospital will invest in developing the editorial team, enhancing scientific review capabilities, and expanding global academic cooperation networks.

### 4.4. Strengthening International Integration

International integration is one of the important strategic priorities to ensure professional capacity and update advanced models. Thong Nhat Hospital is and will continue to promote strategic cooperation with major medical organizations worldwide and geriatric centers in Japan, Germany, France, and Korea. Through technology transfer programs, expert training, internships, and operational model consulting, the hospital will gradually localize and adapt global standards suitable to Vietnam's context.

Simultaneously, the hospital will host annual ASEAN geriatric conferences, build open academic platforms to connect global experts. Initiatives such as building a national elderly health database, coordinating multinational research, and participating in building national health policies adapted to population aging are evidence of Thong Nhat Hospital's commitment and capacity for deep and broad integration.

## 5. VISION TO 2035

By 2035, Thong Nhat Hospital aims to become:

A special-grade geriatric hospital - a leading comprehensive treatment, rehabilitation, and care center for the elderly in the ASEAN region. To realize this goal, the hospital will build an integrated geriatric treatment complex with 300 specialized inpatient beds, a rehabilitation center with robotic movement support technology, and establish an international-standard palliative care unit. Simultaneously, Thong Nhat Hospital will expand technology transfer cooperation with leading geriatric centers worldwide such as Japan, Singapore, and Europe...

The leader in human resource training and medical technology transfer in geriatrics for the entire country. The hospital plans to establish the Applied Geriatric Institute under the hospital, implementing regular geriatric specialty training programs from undergraduate to postgraduate levels. Short-term courses for nurses - caregivers - care providers will also be standardized and implemented on online learning platforms combined with clinical practice at the hospital.

An international knowledge hub for geriatrics, contributing to building national health policies adapted to a super-aged population. Thong Nhat Hospital will host the annual Vietnam-ASEAN Geriatric Conference, establish multinational research networks on geriatric medicine, build a national elderly health database, and actively participate in national health policy consulting processes related to population aging.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Thong Nhat Hospital stands before a historic opportunity to transform into a national symbol of elderly care. With strategic vision, strong political commitment, high-quality personnel, and a solid traditional foundation, the hospital is fully capable of realizing

the goal of becoming a leading high-tech geriatric center. The path ahead will have many challenges, but it is also a meaningful journey - a journey to build a humane, quality, sustainable, and globally integrated healthcare model, for a healthy and long-lived Vietnam.