

# University Cardiology in

**The University has been at the forefront** of the development of Cardiology since the 1960s, and has been active in leading Singapore in the growth and development of the specialty.

It started with the set-up of the first Coronary Care Unit (CCU) at Medical Unit II (subsequently University Department of Medicine II) at the Outram Road General Hospital, which is now the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) by A/Prof Charles Toh and A/Prof Low Lip Ping. There was no official University Department of Cardiology at the then University of Singapore (now the National University of Singapore) and most of the teaching, research and services were carried out by the two

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University medical units at SGH, namely University Department of Medicine I and II. Cardiology at the University Department of Medicine II was under the stewardship of A/Prof Charles Toh from 1961 to 1975, and later Prof Chia Boon Lock from 1975 to 1985. The University cardiologists led important breakthroughs and progress in cardiology at that time. These included the introduction of cardiac catheterization in 1964 (together with Prof SB Roy who was then a visiting expert), CCU in 1967, M-mode and two-dimensional echocardiography in 1976 and 1980 respectively; and electrophysiology in 1981.

In 1985, all the University clinical departments moved over to the new premises at National University Hospital (NUH) at Kent Ridge. Cardiology service began as the Division of Cardiology, Department of Medicine from 1986 to 1989 with Prof Chia Boon Lock as the Head. During this time, further significant progress was made with the starting of cardiac surgery and coronary angioplasty services, and ambulatory blood pressure monitoring was introduced for the first time in Singapore. In 1989, there was a milestone change in the development of University Cardiology with the formation of the NUH Cardiac Department, with Prof Maurice Choo as its first Chief of



Department. The other chiefs who followed included A/Prof Christopher Chew, Prof Chia Boon Lock, A/Prof Lim Yean Teng and currently A/Prof Tan Huay Cheem. In 2001, further transformational change occurred with the formation of The Heart Institute (THI) within the National HealthCare Group (NHG) cluster comprising cardiology and cardiac surgery at NUH, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Alexandra Hospital; and Prof Lee Chuen Neng is its director.

### **CARDIOLOGY SERVICE**

Today, the NUH Cardiac department continues to shoulder the triple responsibilities of providing evidence-based medical care, training of undergraduates, post-graduates and paramedics; and spearheading basic and clinical research in close collaboration with



# Singapore

A/Prof Tan Huay Cheem, THI @ NUH



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various research bodies in the nation. The centre attracts a large number of patients, both local and abroad, who come seeking high quality cardiac care. The volume of patients, both subsidized and private, continue to rise at a rapid rate annually. The services provided are comprehensive and it is the only public institution to provide a complete range of non-invasive imaging modalities ranging from echocardiography, nuclear scintigraphic studies, magnetic resonance imaging and multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) coronary angiography. It also provides invasive treatment in the form of percutaneous diagnostic and interventional procedures for coronary artery disease, congenital heart and peripheral vascular disease. In the field of pacing and electrophysiology, the department provides cardiac pacemaker implantation, electrophysiologic studies and radiofrequency

ablation of complex arrhythmias led by a team of well-trained electrophysiologists. Other sub-specialized clinical services provided include the treatment of patients with pulmonary hypertension, cardiac diseases during pregnancy, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy; vascular medicine, sports cardiology and cardiac rehabilitation.

## **CARDIOLOGY TRAINING**

As an academic institution, the department is committed to educating and training the next generation of cardiologists. In the early days when structured training programmes did not exist in Singapore, many Cardiologists spent their entire or part of training overseas. Currently, all NUH cardiology trainees are required to spend three years in the Advanced Specialist Training