

DoM Newsletter

JAN · MAR 2022 EDITION

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Special thanks to the following for their time to contribute to our newsletter

- Dr Dariusz Piotr Olszyna from Division of AIM
- Assoc Prof Louis Chai from Division of Infectious Disease
- Ms June Chua from Neuroscience Clinic
- Ms Maillika Raguraman, Secretary of Department of Medicine
- Dr Valencia Lim from Division of RCCM and Ms Chong Yew Mei from Department of Medicine

We would love to hear from you!

If you or your division would like to be featured in our next newsletter, please email to us before 15th May 2022 to: Dom_CorpComms@nuhs.edu.sg, cc boon_yin_ong@nuhs.edu.sg and / or s.foo@nus.edu.sg.

Please email us at the above email addresses for any feedback regarding this issue of the DOM Newsletter!!

Incredible Care with AIM in year 2022

What can we look forward to in the year 2022 with the Division of Advanced Internal Medicine (AIM)? Find below some glimpses of what we can expect from the Division, from Dr Dariusz's perspective.

2021 saw many exciting changes in AIM. We introduced NUHS@Home service in late 2020, initially with just three patients. In 2021 it expanded and stepped up to function as the COVID-19 Virtual Ward with currently more than 100 patients at any given time. Our Virtual Ward team cares for increasingly more complicated patients, such as transplant recipients, actively treating them with the newest COVID-19 therapeutics. These patients would otherwise be admitted to NUH putting pressure on our BOR.

This year, we will open AMU2.0 with more beds, procedural hub, HOT clinic and enhanced care area. It should help ease the pressure on ED and all those who currently go to ED to ensure IDC.

We have worked with Gastroenterology and Endocrinology colleagues to redirect referrals which can be managed by general internists such as loss of weight, abnormal liver function enzymes or osteoporosis. Soon we hope to include others, such as headaches, currently referred to Neurology.

We have created a VDO for urinary tract infections and are trying hard to decrease the length of stay for our patients. In 2022 we hope to be flexible in shifting our manpower between inpatient and outpatient services to be a more agile clinical team. We look forward to 2022 to be no less exciting than 2021 as we work together with others towards *Incredible Care*.

Contribution made by Dr Dariusz Piotr Olszyna, Head of Division of Advanced Internal Medicine



NUHS@Home service saw the introduction of BotMD as part of patient care to monitor and track the residents' vitals.



Current Acute Medical Unit.

Looking forward to the new AMU2.0!



Pictures are for illustration purposes only and are not entirely a true reflection of the future AIM.

Banding together with the scientific community to tackle COVID-19

For the last two years, the global scientific community has banded together to learn more about the SARS-COV virus in a bid to improve understanding of the virus and pinpoint the most effective treatments. One of the participants contributing to this concerted effort is the Department of Medicine's Division of Infectious Diseases, which has taken part in several multi-national, multi-centre trials.

Beyond [understanding the virus and its evolution](#), some of the most significant studies have been focussed on therapeutics for treating severe COVID-19 infection. According to Assoc Prof Louis Chai, Senior Consultant, Division of Infectious Diseases, NUH was one of the first sites to recruit patients in Singapore. As early as February 2020 – in the early days of COVID-19 – NUH recruited the very first patient for a trial on Remdesivir. This and subsequent trials have since validated the efficacy of Remdesivir, which now forms part of the treatment protocol in Singapore for patients with serious COVID-19 infection.

The Division also participated in [a trial that affirmed the role of the use of the immunomodulator, Baricitinib, in combination with Remdesivir](#). In the study, it was shown that combining both drugs was superior to treatment with Remdesivir alone. The drug combination was effective in reducing recovery time and accelerating improvement in clinical status among patients with COVID-19.

Significantly, Division drew deeply from participating in these international trials. It has not only used the data from these trials, but has also considered these findings against the local experience. This has led to important improvements in the way COVID-19 is treated, such as in the development of clinical pathways that better prognosticate patients and permit enhanced clinical decision-making and interventions.

Assoc Prof Chai also shared that: “Based on this knowledge and experience gained from trials, we are currently conducting our own in-house clinical trials for high-risk patients.”

The team has also been actively involved in vaccine work. In a retrospective Singapore-based multi-centre study, [they confirmed mRNA vaccine efficacy at preventing symptomatic and severe COVID-19 associated with Delta infection](#). It showed that vaccination is associated with faster drop in the viral load and a more robust immune response, underscoring the importance of the national vaccination programme and the role of vaccination as a key strategy to control the COVID-19 pandemic and Singapore's move towards COVID-19 resilience.

In addition to this work, the team has begun trials for a made-in-Singapore vaccine based on the Duke-NUS vaccine platform. As Assoc Prof Chai notes: “As the virus evolves, we are keeping track of its evolution to keep pace with whatever challenges come our way.” To this end, he said, “Our partnerships within and outside of NUH – such as with fellow colleagues and those from SGH and NCID – will continue to strengthen our ability to combat the virus and keep our community safe.”



DoM's Journey to NGEMR - Next Generation Electronic Medical Record System



Ms June Chua hard at work during one of the training sessions.

This article offers us an insight through the eyes of one of our Credentialed Trainers (CTs), Ms June Chua, detailing the importance of the adaptation of the system both at the Department and Hospital level. She also keenly shared the challenges and difficulties faced while performing the role. While she wasn't the only trainer for the Department, she definitely is the voice of a team of 3 CTs who successfully saw through the process of training of our over 400 staff out of our 600-strong department's both clinical and non-clinical staff over a two-month period.

Honorable mention to our other two CTs are Ms Valerie Ma and Sister Menaga. Long and arduous is the process, but their hard work paid off and this article is dedicated to them for their hard work!

With a decade of work in the NUH Department of Medicine under her belt, June Chua has had a lot of experience in managing clinical processes. The clinic manager takes pride in working to improve the patient experience and delivering smooth care flows. These days, she is looking forward to doing even more as the Department – together with the whole of NUH – adopts the Next Generation Electronic Medical Record (NGEMR) system.

The implementation of NGEMR is a nationally-driven effort to transform healthcare using an integrated Electronic Health Record (EHR) software application that harmonises all IT systems across

the organisation. June explains that this will fully integrate and improve access to patient information for greater care efficiency, patient safety and convenience.

In October 2021, she undertook training to become a Credentialed Trainer and formed part of a team of 14, tasked with rolling out training to over 200 Patient Service Associates (PSAs) and administrative staff across NUH. Though it has been a huge undertaking, June took it on with determination. By February 2022 – about two weeks before the system went 'live' – the team concluded their trainings.

“It was challenging,” admits June, “But satisfying.” For her ‘students’ it meant moving away from old familiar systems and mastering a brand new one in just three days. As a trainer, it was about making the learning as accessible and relevant as possible. June also took pains to cater the training to different competency levels and varying learning speeds.

Her experience as a former PSA helped to some extent as she understood the work from their perspective and could adapt the training to show them how the new system could be applied to current tasks and workflows.

While it has been a big undertaking, June sees the shift over to a new system as important. “By offering greater visibility data and access to resources it offers a seamless way for everyone in the organisation to integrate all our workflows,” she reflects. “Wherever patients go, the records are all in one place,” she adds. This improves communications, care efficiency and leads to a better patient outcome and experience.

On the operational side, it also benefits the Department as it becomes easier for staff to book and schedule appointments. For example, the system is able to automatically ‘link’ associated diagnostic tests in tandem with clinic follow-ups; if any changes are made, staff are alerted to schedule these tests and appointments sequentially. The system also gives clinical teams greater control over managing team-based care plans. This also means that as NUH moves towards relationship-based care, doctors can be better engaged in the patient care plans.



Sister Menaga pictured above, DoM Credentialed Trainer, during one of the NGEMR training sessions for the Nursing department.

From an organisational standpoint, NGEMR presents many opportunities for transforming the healthcare system. It will improve the quality of healthcare and clinical outcomes by increasing administrative efficiencies, facilitating care coordination, preventing medical errors and tracking data over time.

For June, the experience has been a fulfilling one. She enjoys meeting lots of people from all the different departments and learning best practices from other departments. “It has been a good opportunity for cross-sharing,” she says.

And it is rewarding to see her ‘students’ grow more and more confident in using the new system. This will be an important factor in the journey ahead. “There is much more work to be done as we continue to refine workflows in NGEMR,” she explains. “Now that we have a similar understanding, we can make the most of the new system and work together to take our workflows and processes forward.”

The Department of Medicine would like to thank June and all other Credentialed Trainers of the department who undertook this task in their stride despite the complexity of the project. With the adoption of the new system, we are sure looking forward to delivering Incredible Care to all our patients at NUH!



From left to right: Sister Menaga, Ms Valerie Ma and Ms June Chua. The three-member team of Credentialed Trainers undertook the training of more than 400 DOM staff on the new NGEMR system over a short span of 2 months.

Morale boosters for our Specialist Outpatient Clinics

In the week of 28th Feb 2022, we saw the official launch of the long awaited NGEMR for NUH. The Department understood well the stress brought about from getting used to and learning of the new system of our ground staff, on top of the day-to-day operations, and thus prepared treats for our Specialist Outpatient Clinics.

Hope these treats did their jobs well with bringing some cheers to their busy days in the clinics!



Celebrating Women, Celebrating Strength

International Women’s Day (IWD), is a day we celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. To commemorate this year’s IWD, we asked two new mums in the Department to share how motherhood has reinforced and renewed the meaning of IWD – and their identity as multi-hyphenated women.

“Women juggle so many roles every day and we often give ourselves little credit for it. Of all the roles, motherhood is definitely the most special and challenging.

This IWD, as a mother, I’m reminded to take time for myself; to be grateful for what I’ve been able to achieve now with increased equality at the workplace; and to support other women. To fellow working mommas, it’s tough but you’re stronger than you think.

You are enough!”

- Dr Valencia Lim, Division of RCCM, mother to 8-month old, Ethan



“We are cute daughters,
We are sweet sisters,
We are lovely lovers,
We are darling wives,
We are adorable mothers,
We are a sources of strength,
We are incredible,
We are women!”

To all the incredible women in the world, shine on, not just today but every single day.

Happy International Women’s Day!”

- Ms Chong Yew Mei, Assistant Manager, mother to 8-month-old, Yu Xi

In other happy announcements

The Department would also like to extend our heartiest congratulations to Dr Adeline Yong from the Division of Dermatology, on the birth of her daughter, in December 2021.

Here’s sharing an adorable picture of her baby and we look forward to welcome Dr Adeline back to the department in the coming months.



A career of many milestones and memories



With a career spanning 44 years, Mallika Raguraman has worked with many prominent doctors at NUH. She first joined the NUS Department of Paediatrics in 1979 when it was still located at the Singapore General Hospital. At that time, she worked for Singapore's Father of Paediatrics, the late Emeritus Professor, Wong Hock Boon.

In 1985, when all the NUS departments moved to NUH, she followed. Since then, she has journeyed with the organisation from its 'birth' and seen its growth and evolution. After spending about a decade with the Department of Paediatrics, Mallika moved to the Department of Medicine in 1994 – then helmed by the late Prof Chan Heng Leong.

Currently a Secretary at the NUH Department of Medicine, she splits her job scope between the latter and the Division of Graduate Studies. It is a lot to take on, but this is where her experience really shines.

After all, Mallika has taken on a vast number of responsibilities over the years, particularly in the area of medical student exams – the MBBS. Work was very different then, she recalled. "We didn't just help with the twice-yearly exams," she said, "We were managing research grants, HR matters, budgeting, exams and students' curriculum!" Much of this, she said was done alongside her colleague and mentor LC Chong, with whom she worked with since NUH days.

In the past, the work could also be very manual, Mallika recalled. For example, during every exam season, Mallika and her colleague – armed with their laptops – would travel with then-Head, A/Prof Benjamin Ong, to Changi General Hospital, Singapore General Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Alexandra Hospital, with a final stop back at NUH.

During this time, they would print the examiners' booklets for the MBBS exams, sort out the essay paper and give these out to the two examiners for marking. They would also collate all the examination marks.

Mallika shares that A/Prof Ong was instrumental in formulating the excel mark sheet, while she and her colleague would write the marks and examiners' names in fine print. "He helped and taught us to input the clinical marks in the computer's electronic system," she recalled. "We would have to be very careful and check and recheck to make sure everything was correct." These days, she said, everything is in an integrated system online, making the work much more seamless.

Even as she recollects the many differences in her work and how it has evolved, she brings up fond memories with the organisation and its growth and leadership changes, from Prof Chan Heng Leong, Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, A/Prof Benjamin Ong, Prof Lawrence Ho Khek-Yu, A/Prof Dan Yock Young to Prof A Vathsala today.

One thing stands out: the people she has met across the many departments, many of whom she calls friends. "I 'grew up' with many of them," she said, seeing them progress from housemen to consultants. Even though the organisation is so large, it still feels like an extended family to her. "It makes me happy to come to work and see so many familiar faces each day," she said.

Apart from the many colleagues she has worked with for decades, she also enjoys meeting new staff, and guiding them in understanding the inner workings of the organisation. In fact, many seek her out for advice and insight about the Department, its history and people. Her 'insider knowledge' helps her lend support to her colleagues in various operations and events. From making sure that the right administrative processes are in place to catering to dietary and meal preferences, she can be counted on to look after all her colleagues and facilitate meaningful interactions. "Whatever I can do to help, I will do," she said.



Mallika and Faculty of Medicine's library staff at the College of Medicine Building



Mallika receiving a painting from Prof Yeo Khay Guan

Insignia Contest

The month of March saw the conclusion of the DoM Insignia contest.

This contest calls for the creativity of our staff at DOM to design a logo that represents symbolically of what our Department stands for.

In the words of Prof Vathsala,
"The Department of Medicine is dedicated to providing excellent care for adult patients suffering from the full spectrum of medical diseases. We strive to advance the health of our patients in NUH and the community-at-large by working together as a team of dedicated clinicians and healthcare providers. Together, we

- *Champion best clinical practices and provide the highest quality of care for our patients;*
- *Nurture lifelong learning;*
- *Foster the spirit of rigorous enquiry and research into human illness;*
- *And care for each other as we journey together on this mission."*

With the above words in mind, the designs we received for the contest showcased the creativeness of our staff and also a true reflection of what they feel Department of Medicine is.

The designs were also blasted via email for all staff to vote for their favourite design. The voting had closed on the 28th March.

The results of the contest will be announced by 19th April and a lucky draw will be conducted for voters to win some attractive prizes!

Do look out for the results in your inbox!

