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Dr Dawn Lim
Promotion from Registrar to Associate Consultant

Dr Chan Hwei Wuen
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Being “the Best”

In our busy Eye Department, it is easy to get bogged down by the daily grind. A lot needs to be done to keep the department functioning, so it can effectively conduct the daily business of patient care. However, as we look ahead, I would like to take a moment to reflect on what it means to be “The Best Eye Department”.

Being the best for our patients

I am sure all staff at NUH Eye strives to provide the best medical care for our patients. We aim to offer the most effective, evidence-based treatments that medical science has to offer. But numerous writers have reminded us that having the best treatments does not always translate into providing the best care. The way this care is delivered also matters greatly to our patients. For a start, I hope we will aim to do next year is to consistently ease our patients’ journey through the healthcare system. There are many aspects to accomplishing this – from optimising the administrative processes to better communication. This will not be easy, but I believe this is a challenge worth undertaking and one that we are capable of.

Being the best for our staff

The work environment is so much more than the physical. The best support we have comes from each other – fellow soldiers in the same trench. How do we be the best for each other? By treating others as we would have them treat us, by building each other up, by helping each teammate achieve his or her maximum potential, by bearing each others’ burdens. This also comes by making sure we do our own work well, and then going the extra mile to help a colleague. The challenge is to do this consistently. I have seen many fine examples of this among our staff, so I know this goal is achievable.

Being the best for our community

This is a little harder to define, but I’d like to frame it in two ways:

a. Training better healthcare workers for the future – doctors and other eyecare professionals like nurses and clinic assistants. Each and every one of them is important for our local and global community. As an academic medical centre, we have many opportunities to develop and conduct training. It is my hope that our various education programmes will provide the best training to all aspiring eyecare professionals.

b. Developing better treatments. Aiming to understand diseases and developing better ways to treat our patients has always been the overall objective of doing research. We are beneficiaries of the many notable research achievements of our illustrious faculty. Perhaps one goal we should aim for is the development of the next generation of clinician-scientists who will lead research in the future.

Can we be “The Best Eye Department”? We certainly must aim to be – for our patients, for each other and for our community.
Not many people know that Sister Carol has been with our department for more than 10 years! She has seen many changes - from way before she became a Sister to our move to the Medical Centre.

Due to our conflicting schedules and clinic constraints, there were many failed attempts to meet up over coffee (there is always an excuse for an additional cup of caffeine). We were sitting in her office late one evening, and I was about to give caffeine a pass for another day when I decided to corner her in her office. Sister Carol was busy contacting various personnel, but still gestured to me to sit - she probably found thisalker a bit too persistent.

Jennie popped her head in at 6.30pm and looked at me puzzled. The clinic was fast becoming a ghost town.

What’s the happiest moment in your nursing career?

She did not hesitated and smiled - “The best moments would have to be the past one to two years, when we worked as a team from moving to settling into our new clinic here. This was not just between nurses, but also between nurses and doctors.” There were difficult moments, of course, but they have already passed.

To emphasise her goal on teamwork, she brought me to the pantry where the management philosophy hung. She had in her quiet time after our move to the Medical Centre, been impressed by the acronym “FAVOUR”. She shared it with Beiyun and Jennie before pulling it up: “To forge strong relationships, achieve excellence, voice concerns and suggestions, open to communications, unbiasedness towards colleagues and respect for each other. This is what I hope to achieve in our.” I nodded, remembering my very first medical officer posting where Sister Carol approached me for further suggestions on. “It is something I see you trying at, even before our move.” I said “It is important and we’re trying to emphasise that,” she concluded.

Sister Carol also acknowledged that a sense of belonging and ownership were crucial. “We have tried to nurture that by giving roles, rather than what is usually expected and performed. There’s still a long way to go but we are trying.”

I smiled wryly, noticing that this conversation had not left the topic of our department, I told her as much (evidently journalism is not everyone’s forte).

She laughed and agreed that it was an occupation and a preoccupation. “Your daughter must have wanted to do nursing, seeing you as a role model in her life.” I said “Of course I advised her against it,” she laughed again, “so she’s doing something else. My husband and daughter are very supportive but nursing isn’t always easy, there is so much to do and overcome. There are triumphs but this is not common.”

Do you regret then, being a nurse?

“I don’t”, she relaxed back into the chair as we looked out of the window. “There are tough moments but I am thankful for everything and do not regret anything.”

“We really need to have a cup of coffee sometime,” I told her.

She smiled and agreed to answer any other burning questions. “And listen to any suggestions,” she added.

The writer is a medical officer at the NUHS Department of Ophthalmology
My first experience with the seniors at the Outward Bound Singapore (OBS)

by: Dr Sun Chen-Hsin

The 3 day/2 night OBS camp at Pulau Ubin has become a tradition of the orientation programme for all NUHS residents. It is attended not only by the new residents, but also the senior management, including the CEO, CMB and programme directors. While residents only have to attend this camp once, the senior management team goes twice a year! The Programme Director for the 7th OBS was A/Prof Clement Tan, and the whopping number of residents required a high level of commitment from the senior management team. Together, we travelled to Pulau Ubin in the same boat, bunked in the same dormitory and sweated it out during the games and activities.

Designed to challenge our ability to work together as a team, the games and activities highlighted the TRICE values: Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, Compassion and Excellence. For me, the highlight of the camp was the kayaking challenge. We were tasked to complete the activity within a given time and had to navigate across mangrove swamps. Although physically exhausting, the experience was an exhilarating one because we managed to complete the challenge in record time. I attributed this feat to proper planning, as well as competent navigation and coordination.

The OBS experience served as an excellent ice-breaker for the new residents and our seniors. In the past, new residents rarely had the opportunity to interact with their seniors. At OBS, the seniors got along with us well and shared with us their vision for the healthcare industry. It was indeed a great way to be orientated into the NUHS family.

As a new resident in the ophthalmology department with prior posting experience, my immediate goal would be to develop my clinical acumen, and to be able to function as a safe and dependable doctor. Following which, I hope to put my engineering background to use and identify areas where engineering solutions can be applied to further improve patient care. I am excited to contribute to the NUHS family with my new friends.

The writer is a first year resident at the NUHS Department of Ophthalmology.
A regional symposium on electrophysiology conducted by our visiting lecturer, Professor Graham Holder from Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, United Kingdom, was recently held in NUH. Professor Holder is a world-renowned expert on electrophysiology studies of the eye, and is on the editorial boards of the British Medical Journal and Documenta Ophthalmologica, which have produced over 200 publications and book chapters on the topic. The current Director of Electrophysiology at Moorfields Eye Hospital is also the Director of Education of the International Society for Clinical Electrophysiology of Vision (ISCEV).

Electrophysiology is a fundamental and indispensable investigation for assessing retinal and optic nerve function. It provides crucial insights into the roots of retinal diseases, as well as broadens our knowledge of a variety of retinal and neural-ophthalmic diseases. Electrophysiology studies comprise a series of complex tests involving electrodes attached to the eye and the skin around the eye, as well as exposures to different light intensities. The function of the retina is then interpreted from the various electrical waveforms emitted by the nerve cells in the retina and optic nerve. These tests are carried out by experienced and skilled personnel, and ophthalmologists are usually trained in this field for accurate data interpretation and reporting.

Professor Holder’s visit to Singapore earlier this year coincided with the setting up of a new Electrophysiology facility in NUH. This state-of-the-art facility is currently running in full service and is the latest addition to the many other services offered at the Ophthalmology clinic in NUH.

The half-day symposium was attended by participants from hospitals in Singapore and neighbouring countries, including fellow medical retinal colleagues from Malaysia. This year, the programme aimed to provide attendees with an overview of the principles and clinical applications of electrophysiology, updates on the clinical relevance of electrophysiology in neuro-ophthalmology, the genetic aspects of retinal disorders, medically unexplained visual loss, and acquired retinal diseases including autoimmune retinal disease.

Case studies from Singapore and Malaysia were presented, and Professor Holder discussed them with the audience. The feedback from attendees was positive, and participants benefited from Professor Holder’s expertise. We look forward to similar interactive seminars on electrophysiology to be conducted in the future.
Congratulations to the following staff who have done us proud!

Prof Wong Tien Yin
The Macula Society 2014
Amall Patz Medal

Prof Aung Tin
National Medical Research Council - Singapore
Translational Research (STaR) Investigator Award

A/Prof Cheng Ching-Yu
APAO Outstanding Prevention of Blindness Award and Achievement Award

Dr Cheryl Ngo
Singapore Medical Journal
Best Research Paper Award 2013 – 3rd Prize

Dr Chelvin Sng
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (ASCRS) Annual Meeting 2014
– Best Paper of Session Award

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Department of Ophthalmology
Low Vision Enabling (LoVE) Programme

The LoVE Programme provides integrated and holistic care to persons with vision loss. Through a multidisciplinary care approach, the programme aims to minimise the effects of vision loss, restore independence and improve the quality of life of persons experiencing visual impairment.

The programme takes the individual with low vision through a customised rehabilitation process involving low vision evaluation, functional assessment, prescribing of low vision devices, vision rehabilitation therapy and independent living skills training.

If you would like to find out more or know someone with vision loss who could benefit, please contact us at 6772 5439 / 6772 4503 or email at low_vision@nuhs.edu.sg

National University Health System groups the National University Hospital, NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and NUS Faculty of Dentistry under a common governance structure to create synergies to advance health by integrating excellent clinical care, research and education.

The enhanced capabilities and capacity will enable the NUHS to deliver better patient care, train future generations of doctors more effectively and bring innovative treatments to patients through groundbreaking research.

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