WORK & PLAY
See our nurses like you’ve never seen them before!

UNDERSTANDING SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DISORDERS IN KIDS
TUBERCULOSIS: HOW TO PREVENT IT

A member of the NUHS
IN THIS ISSUE...

03 MY LIFE
Case Management Officer
Tan Chin Ling tells us why her work is emotionally challenging yet rewarding.

04 NEWSBEAT
Bringing music to NUH patients

05 DID YOU KNOW...
Notable milestones and fun happenings to mark SG50

06 COVER STORY
Meet four nurses who work and play hard and the stars of a national campaign

12 IN THE KNOW
The benefits of early intervention and specialised therapy for children with language disorders

14 WELLBEING
- Dangers of weight-loss drugs
- Tuberculosis is on the rise again
- Common cycling injuries

20 10 MINUTES WITH...
NUH Sports Centre’s
Dr Wang Mingchang

"I never take my friends and family for granted"

Being regularly surrounded by patients in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is something Tan Chin Ling takes in her stride. For the case management officer, her role of facilitating brain death certification – in most cases, for potential organ donors – is one she views with much significance and purpose.

"Together with the doctors and transplant coordinators, our job is to support the family in understanding their loved one’s diagnosis, and the process and significance of brain death certification,” says the 24-year-old, who works at the National University Centre for Organ Transplantation (NUCOT) and works closely with departments like the ICU and the Department of Medical Social Work, as well as officers from the Ministry of Health.

The Human Organ Transplant Act (HOTA) allows the kidney, heart, liver and corneas to be removed in the event of death from any cause for transplantation. Since 1 November 2009, HOTA covers all Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 21 and above, who have no mental disorders, unless they have opted out.

It is not an easy job being the bearer of news of a patient’s passing, and Chin Ling says it is when families break down that’s most painful to witness.

Giving patients with organ failure a spark of hope makes all the effort worthwhile"

In Singapore, three new patients develop end-stage organ failure every day. she adds. “Up to five patients can be helped through organs donated by just one deceased donor. That’s 10 to 15 years added to one patient’s life. Giving patients with organ failure a spark of hope makes all the effort worthwhile.”

For Chin Ling, it’s always gratifying to see a family pull through a difficult situation with the team’s help. “Families appreciate when we give them regular updates,” she says, recounting a case when one family thanked her for going the extra mile with their father.

“We did additional tests, and I updated them on the time of the tests and when the report would be back. I also called them personally to check that they had received the report.”

She adds, “It’s important for families to know what to expect so they can make arrangements. When we are worried about our loved ones, not knowing what is going on can be very stressful.”

Almost two years on the job and Chin Ling says she’s learnt a lot – mostly of all that life is full of uncertainties. “My work has taught me to cherish my friends and family and to never take them for granted.”

For more information on HOTA and other related information, visit http://bit.ly/1CP2Du3 or scan this QR code
very first Wednesday of the month, patients, staff and visitors of the NUH are treated to live musical entertainment. Officially launched in April this year, “Musical Rendezvous @ NUH” is a series of concerts and shows held in various venues within the hospital, aimed at bringing the joy of music and the arts to patients, staff and visitors.

Presented by SOXAL and VitalAire-Vauathlon and produced by local theatre company Sing’theatre, the programme showcases a roster of local musicians and covers a variety of musical genres, from classical to folk and Chinese pop. Visitors and members of the public can enjoy lunchtime concerts at the NUH Main Building Lobby B. These are followed by performances in the wards for patients’ enjoyment.

“We aim to engage and connect people through the common language of music,” says NUH CEO, Adjunct Associate Professor Joe Sim. “We hope the concerts will complement the work of our doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in providing our patients with an environment for holistic healing.”

“Music is a powerful and universal language that brings people together,” says NUH CEO, Adjunct Associate Professor Joe Sim. “We hope the concerts will complement the work of our doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in providing our patients with an environment for holistic healing.”

For more information, visit singtheatre.com/community-outreach/musical-rendezvous-nuh or scan this QR code.

With SG50 hitting a high this August, here are some notable milestones and fun happenings to keep the celebratory mood going.

**PERKS FOR SENIORS**
To thank senior citizens for their contributions in building our Little Red Dot, various businesses and community organisations are offering goodies and discounts in five areas: dining, leisure, lifelong learning, lifestyle and wellness. To encourage lifelong learning, free courses on everything from healthy cooking to drawing are available to Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 50 and above till the end of the year. Visit sg50seniors.sg for more details.

**SPORTING GOOD TIMES**
Cap off a fantastic year for Singapore sports by cheering on our athletes at the 8th ASEAN Para Games (5–9 December). From archery and athletics to ten-pin bowling and wheelchair basketball, 15 sports will be featured. Fittingly, to mark our 50th, this will be the first time Singapore hosts the Games and a multi-sports event for athletes with disabilities of this scale.

**MAP OUT YOUR LOVE**
During the first half of 2015, more than 80,000 contributions were made to the First crowd-sourced map of the nation’s “heart”. The SG Heart Map plots out 50 of the most enduring and cherished places that define Singapore as our home. From Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park to the National Library building, learn more about the places through photos, memories and stories that continue to be contributed by Singaporeans.

Make your own contribution or sign up for a guided SG Heart Map tour at heartmap.sg.

**50 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER**
Street magician Tommy Chiang, better known as Tommillusions, will mark Singapore’s golden jubilee with 50 free performances all around the island. To date, he’s done about 15 shows in various venues such as West Coast community club and shopping malls, and plans to complete the shows by end of December. Visit tommillusions.com for the latest updates.

**FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING**
To mark 50 years of diplomatic ties, Singapore received a gift of four koalas from Australia who will reside in the new Koala Enclosure at the Singapore Zoo. Also, the “50 Bridges” art initiative will feature 50 pieces of public art by Australian and Singaporean artists staged throughout Singapore’s heartland. Visit sg50oz.sg for details.

**#5 MAD FOR MUSEUMS**
Two brand new museums opened their doors to visitors this year: the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum and the Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris art museum. Art lovers and heritage buffs alike have been waiting with bated breath for the refurbished City Hall and former Supreme Court to be reborn as the National Gallery Singapore, slated to open in November. Can’t wait that long? Head to the ever-reliable Peranakan Building our Little Red heartland. Singapore’s heartmap.sg. To thank senior citizens for their contributions in building our Little Red Dot, various businesses and community organisations are offering goodies and discounts in five areas: dining, leisure, lifelong learning, lifestyle and wellness. To encourage lifelong learning, free courses on everything from healthy cooking to drawing are available to Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 50 and above till the end of the year. Visit sg50seniors.sg for more details.

**#2 SPORTING GOOD TIMES**
Cap off a fantastic year for Singapore sports by cheering on our athletes at the 8th ASEAN Para Games (5–9 December). From archery and athletics to ten-pin bowling and wheelchair basketball, 15 sports will be featured. Fittingly, to mark our 50th, this will be the first time Singapore hosts the Games and a multi-sports event for athletes with disabilities of this scale.

**#4 MAP OUT YOUR LOVE**
During the first half of 2015, more than 80,000 contributions were made to the First crowd-sourced map of the nation’s “heart”. The SG Heart Map plots out 50 of the most enduring and cherished places that define Singapore as our home. From Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park to the National Library building, learn more about the places through photos, memories and stories that continue to be contributed by Singaporeans.

Make your own contribution or sign up for a guided SG Heart Map tour at heartmap.sg.

**#6 FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING**
To mark 50 years of diplomatic ties, Singapore received a gift of four koalas from Australia who will reside in the new Koala Enclosure at the Singapore Zoo. Also, the “50 Bridges” art initiative will feature 50 pieces of public art by Australian and Singaporean artists staged throughout Singapore’s heartland. Visit sg50oz.sg for details.

**#1 PERKS FOR SENIORS**
To thank senior citizens for their contributions in building our Little Red Dot, various businesses and community organisations are offering goodies and discounts in five areas: dining, leisure, lifelong learning, lifestyle and wellness. To encourage lifelong learning, free courses on everything from healthy cooking to drawing are available to Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 50 and above till the end of the year. Visit sg50seniors.sg for more details.

**#3 50 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER**
Street magician Tommy Chiang, better known as Tommillusions, will mark Singapore’s golden jubilee with 50 free performances all around the island. To date, he’s done about 15 shows in various venues such as West Coast community club and shopping malls, and plans to complete the shows by end of December. Visit tommillusions.com for the latest updates.

**#5 MAD FOR MUSEUMS**
Two brand new museums opened their doors to visitors this year: the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum and the Singapore Pinacothèque de Paris art museum. Art lovers and heritage buffs alike have been waiting with bated breath for the refurbished City Hall and former Supreme Court to be reborn as the National Gallery Singapore, slated to open in November. Can’t wait that long? Head to the ever-reliable Peranakan Museum for its “Great Peranakan: Fifty Remarkable Lives” exhibition, on till April 2016.

**#6 FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING**
To mark 50 years of diplomatic ties, Singapore received a gift of four koalas from Australia who will reside in the new Koala Enclosure at the Singapore Zoo. Also, the “50 Bridges” art initiative will feature 50 pieces of public art by Australian and Singaporean artists staged throughout Singapore’s heartland. Visit sg50oz.sg for details.
TOH SEOW MEI
Senior Nurse Clinician
Passion: Scuba diving

It’s surprising to Toh Seow Mei that many people think nurses are non-athletic and that they wouldn’t be involved in a “risky” sport like scuba diving. But she points out that the sport is great for building fitness and honing skills like concentration and coordination. “You learn to remain constantly aware and focused while underwater,” she says. “Whether you’re a nurse or a divemaster, you’re expected to be well-trained, to follow responsible practices and adhere to good safety standards. Good judgement, which comes with experience, is also important both in diving and at work.”

A nurse with NUH since graduating in 1996 and winner of the National Day Award 2014 (Efficiency Medal), Seow Mei took up scuba diving in 2001, and has made many friends through the sport. “You meet people from different countries and professions and learn to communicate with them,” she says. “Diving has also helped me build even better interpersonal skills and confidence, which in turn motivates me to face new challenges as I progress through different phases of nursing.”

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD
Meet Ahmad Rafian, Edwin, Seow Mei and Usha – nurses with passion, both on and off duty
For Ahmad Rafian bin Abdul Talib, there are more similarities than differences between being a drummer and a nurse. Both involve teamwork and in either role, he plays an important part in ensuring things go smoothly. “When on stage with my band, I’m the one who guides the pace of the performance. At work, I make sure my patients are in stable condition at all times; I report any unusual situations to my senior so we can take appropriate action immediately,” he says.

Ahmad Rafian, who’s been in nursing for almost five years, has enjoyed drumming since he was a child and even joined the school band. “I’ve learnt a lot through drumming. It allows me to express my feelings in a safe zone,” he shares. “I’ve also learnt to make clear judgments and be more aware of my surroundings, which helps me be a better nurse.”

At least four days a week, you’ll find Edwin Wu with friends at the gym lifting weights and training for his favourite sports of bodybuilding and mixed martial arts (MMA). “We leave the gym happily with sore muscles after working out hard, and I really enjoy the process and knowing that my muscles are getting stronger every day,” he says.

Asked if bodybuilding has helped him in his work as a nurse, Edwin gives a resounding yes. “Bodybuilding not only allows me to strengthen my muscles (so I can lift and carry patients with ease), but it also helps me manage my stress efficiently.” He likens MMA, which he took up as a casual sport, to nursing in that both require discipline and cool-headedness.

A nurse for two years, the 24-year-old hopes to serve as a good role model for his patients. “Health is wealth – everybody knows that, but not everybody practises it,” he says. “So I share my hobbies with my patients and their families and try to persuade them to exercise more so they can lead healthy lifestyles.”
A visit to the Canadian Rockies with her sister almost 20 years ago opened Usha Menon’s eyes to the joys of hiking. “It’s so refreshing to walk in the woods, breathe in fresh air and see animals in their natural environment,” she says.

Usha goes on a big hiking or trekking trip at least every other year, and otherwise takes the opportunity whenever she can to spend time with friends and family who also enjoy outdoor activities. “Some people feel that nursing is already ‘hard work’ and holidays are about pampering oneself, not for doing such strenuous activities.”

But to this 30-year nursing veteran, hiking is calming. “It’s helped me tackle challenging situations and take things in stride,” she says, recalling a trip to Annapurna Base Camp in the Himalayas with friends last year. “It was a tough trek, but by encouraging each other, we reached the camp together. It’s not unlike nursing, where a multidisciplinary team must work cohesively to achieve the best possible outcomes for our patients.”
Finding their voice

Children with speech and language disorders can benefit from early intervention and specialised therapy.

If you’ve ever experienced a language barrier while travelling and felt disoriented, you’ll know the sense of disconnection. Fortunately, it is temporary. But for those with speech and language disorders – particularly young children – the world can be a lonely and alienating place.

Children with these disorders may face difficulties in meeting communication milestones, or they may not be able to develop optimal social relationships. However, their condition can be helped, and it’s crucial that these children are seen for therapy as quickly as possible.

The NUH recently released a new booklet for educators to raise awareness of and address common misconceptions about children with speech or language impairments. Language Impairment In School-aged Children answers questions that the hospital’s therapists regularly field from teachers. It includes suggestions for supporting children with speech and language problems. “We hope to advocate for the children we treat so we can help improve their overall well-being,” says Ms Lynn Lim, a speech therapist with the NUH Rehabilitation Centre.

The booklet also has examples of classroom behaviours that teachers should note. For instance, a student with language difficulties may stare out of the window during lessons, or repeatedly fail to submit homework. Ms Lim advises teachers to observe examples of their difficulties and share them with the parents or caregivers. The next step, she says, is to consult a developmental paediatrician, who can determine if a child needs therapy.

At the NUH Rehabilitation Centre, children are first assessed to identify their areas of difficulty. For those with language impairment, therapy aims to develop skills that may be as basic as learning object names and functions, or as complex as telling a detailed story about an imaginary adventure. This helps children understand the world around them and equips them with the ability to use specific vocabulary.

For kids with language difficulties, therapy helps develop skills like learning object names or understanding stories.

Speech therapy, on the other hand, focuses on pronunciation, and children are taught to correct and practise their sound production so they can improve their intelligibility.

According to Ms Lim, each programme is tailored to meet the needs of the child and his or her caregivers. “The child’s ability to improve is affected by numerous factors, for example, how much time is spent practising the techniques taught,” she says. “Some children may have medical or mental conditions that affect their rate of learning. However, there is strong evidence that early intervention is effective for children with speech and language impairment.”

WHAT IS LANGUAGE DISORDER?
The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association defines language disorder as difficulties experienced in comprehending and using spoken, written, and other symbols. A child with language impairment may speak or write like this: “Very loud the dog whoa whoa whoa. I ahhhhhh and then BOM the door.”

IS LANGUAGE DISORDER SIMILAR TO DYSEXIA?
No. Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that affects the skills involved in reading and spelling words accurately. While children with language impairment struggle to express themselves verbally, children with dyslexia may be fluent and articulate. Children with dyslexia might also have a tendency to confuse “b” and “d” as well as uppercase and lowercase letters.

WHAT IS SPEECH IMPAIRMENT?
A child with speech impairment has difficulty articulating speech sounds. An example of what he or she might say: “The dog was barking [barking] so loudly! I was so stared [scared].”

To read the booklet, visit http://bit.ly/1MMYgk4 or scan this QR code.
What are the dangers of buying weight-loss drugs online? NUH medical experts weigh in on the risks

NO MIRACLE LOSS

If you’ve ever made a resolution to lose weight or purchased a weight-loss product, you’re not alone. Weight-loss products have skyrocketed in popularity, and it’s estimated that by 2019, the global weight-loss industry could be worth over US$200 billion.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of weight-loss marketers to convince consumers otherwise, no quick-fix solution or pill exists to combat obesity – at least, not one that has been scientifically proven to work.

“Most weight-loss drugs sold as supplements do not undergo rigorous testing in the form of clinical trials to determine their efficacy and safety,” says NUH gastroenterologist Dr Lee Yin Mei. As a result, there is little or no supporting evidence behind the market claims for many non-prescription weight-loss aids and supplements.

According to Dr Koh Tsing Yi, a principal clinical pharmacist at NUH, the products may also contain “hidden ingredients” that are not approved by drug regulators around the world. These unapproved substances, says Dr Koh, can cause “severe side effects like heart attack, stroke and liver failure.”

Health authorities worldwide have been raising awareness about the risks of non-prescription weight-loss drugs, seeing that these drugs are now easily purchased online. Their concerns are valid – in December last year, it was reported that two people were hospitalised after consuming weight-loss drugs that were bought online. The first, a teenager, experienced hallucinations after using a product called Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet for over a month to lose weight. When tested, the product was found to contain potent chemical ingredients including sibutramine, which has been banned in Singapore since 2010. The second victim, a man in his 20s, suffered acute kidney failure after consuming a product called Nutrex Research Adipodex; it was found to contain yohimbine, another locally banned ingredient.

According to Dr Koh, consumers “often feel a false sense of security” when selecting products that are labelled “100% natural”, as they assume these products will have little or no side effects. She notes that apart from the likelihood of “natural” products containing ingredients that may be unsafe, the overconsumption of certain natural compounds may also lead to serious health problems. Green tea extract weight-loss pills, for instance, have been linked to liver failure.

Consumers may also be misled into thinking that products are safe when brands use famous personalities as their ambassadors, adds Dr Koh. As for savvier consumers who read reviews prior to purchasing a product, she warns that they too may fall prey to dishonest advertising, as many companies have been known to pay for or publish false testimonies.

“The healthier option

Individuals who wish to lose weight safely should consult a doctor, such as one from a weight management clinic, to help them through the process. Singapore’s Health Sciences Authority has approved several prescription weight-loss drugs, but patients should not expect miracles, says Dr Lee, “as the effects are modest and there are side effects such as fecal incontinence.”

According to NUH endocrine specialist Dr Khoo Chin Meng, diet and lifestyle changes are the “first and foremost interventions” that doctors will recommend to patients who wish to lose weight. But he notes that while this strategy may work for the less obese, it is often not effective for the severely obese. Such individuals may require pharmacological treatment, he says. Doctors may prescribe drugs to initiate weight loss for these patients and boost their morale until the effects of dietary and lifestyle changes kick in.

“All drugs have side effects, and the use of a drug has to balance benefits and risks,” says Dr Khoo. “It is important that weight-loss drugs are prescribed by qualified physicians who are treating obesity, and that these drugs should be regularly monitored for efficacy and safety.”

Some doctors, like NUH psychiatrist Dr Terence Leong, prefer not to include weight-loss drugs in their weight management plans at all. “A proper psychiatric assessment should be done for patients, to check for underlying emotional conditions leading to overeating,” he says. “These primary causes should be treated, and if there is no formal mental illness, I would advise a more active lifestyle, small frequent meals, regular sleep/wake cycles, and good control of any co-occurring medical illnesses such as diabetes.”

He adds that behavioural therapy may also be helpful, where psychiatrists can work with patients to plan a healthy activity schedule, cope with stress and, most importantly, build self-esteem.
known as a “poor man’s disease”, tuberculosis (TB) claims over a million lives a year. It’s been largely contained in the developing world, where a lack of ventilation, nutrition, and healthcare services have kept the disease alive. But this may soon change as developed nations like Singapore are reporting that TB is on the rise again. Singapore’s position as a global transportation hub exposes us to risk of TB transmission from around the world. That, and an ageing population.

Currently, TB is considered “moderately common” in Singapore, says Dr See Kay Choong, a consultant with NUH’s respiratory and critical care division. He estimates that there are about 2,000 new cases of TB in Singapore every year, or 40 new cases for every 100,000 people. At NUH, about 250 new cases of TB are diagnosed annually.

**WHAT IS TB?**

TB is an infection caused by bacteria (mycobacterium tuberculosis) that can travel through the lymph nodes and bloodstream to any organ in our body. The TB bacteria usually attacks the lungs, and less frequently, the brain and the heart. Without treatment, the disease can be fatal for up to two-thirds of those struck with TB.

According to Dr See, the main symptoms of the disease are persistent coughing that lasts over three weeks, blood in the phlegm, and unexplained weight loss and loss of appetite. However, he stresses that these symptoms are also present in illnesses such as bronchitis and lung cancer, and his advice for anyone with similar symptoms is to seek medical attention early.

**WHO CAN GET IT?**

Anyone can be exposed to TB by inhaling TB bacteria that is sneezed or coughed out by an infected person. Fortunately, most healthy people exposed to TB don’t develop the disease, because TB bacteria can lie dormant in the body. But two groups are said to be more susceptible - those with lung problems, such as smokers and mining industry workers, and those with weakened or weak immune systems, such as HIV-positive patients, young children, and the elderly.

**HOW IS TB TREATED?**

A systemic approach to ensure that patients complete their treatments is important. Patients are usually put on a six-month course of four antimicrobial drugs, and this is best done under the supervision of a healthcare worker. Without proper support, patients may not be motivated to take their medications, and if they give up on treatment halfway, the TB bacteria in their bodies can become resistant to existing drugs.

Once TB becomes partially drug resistant, treatment involves even more drugs and more time, and the chance of a cure drops dramatically. Patients who have dropped out of treatment are a threat to public health because they can transmit new strains of drug-resistant TB to those around them. Drug-resistant TB has spread internationally, and it is an area of concern, says Dr See.

**IS IT PREVENTABLE?**

Yes it is, by maintaining good health and avoiding contact with known TB patients until they are given the all-clear by doctors. Children can receive the BCG vaccination, which is about 70 per cent effective in protecting against the most severe forms of TB, such as TB meningitis, which affects the brain. However, the vaccine is less effective in preventing respiratory disease, which is the more common form of TB for adults.

Individuals with TB should be responsible about taking their medications on time, as this makes them less infectious. Adults at risk can take a blood or skin test to detect the presence of dormant TB bacteria in their bodies; if it is present, antibiotics can eradicate the bacteria before TB develops.

“In Singapore, we have facilities to diagnose and treat, and if necessary, isolate patients,” says Dr See. “We also have a national system to ensure adherence to medications, and to track potential transmission of TB by patients. We are prepared to manage any outbreak of TB.”

Patients with TB must stick with their medications and treatment, as this makes them less infectious and prevents the TB bacteria from being partially drug resistant”

A globalised world has led to an old disease making a comeback – and becoming more drug-resistant
Cycling injuries can be classified into two types: traumatic and overuse. Traumatic injuries, such as fractures, usually result from falling off the bicycle during a crash. Overuse injuries are more common and may occur in cyclists who ride regularly. Common areas affected are the neck, hand and wrist, lower back, knee and buttocks.

What causes overuse injuries?

In Singapore, cycling is a popular sport. An excellent cardiovascular exercise, cycling is also less taxing on the joints as it is a non-impact sport — but it comes with a unique set of injuries.

Comprehensive care for cyclists

How you sit matters

Compression of nerves between the front part of the pelvic bone and the bicycle seat can cause genital pain, burning and/or numbness. Competitive cyclists lean forward until their backs are almost horizontal. In this position, there is increased pressure on the perineum, the area in contact with the saddle. In men, this can result in reduced blood flow to the genitalia. Long term, this can lead to erectile dysfunction.

In a study of 1,786 amateur cyclists, the erectile dysfunction rate was four per cent. A heavier body weight and volume of training may be contributing factors. To avoid compromising blood flow to the perineum, alternate between standing and sitting, and take frequent breaks during long rides. Riding on a recumbent bike is safe as it does not compress the perineum.

Wide ergonomic saddles with a “cut-away” midline section or choppéd nose are designed to reduce pressure on the perineum. Using such a saddle has demonstrated better blood flow to the perineum.

Hands/Wrists

Prolonged cycling with persistently extended wrists, handlebars that are too low or forward, poor padding in gloves or handlebars can result in compression of superficial nerves in the palm and wrist. There may be numbness and tingling in the fingers, especially the little and ring fingers. If compression is prolonged, finger weakness can result. Shorten the handlebar reach, raise the handlebars and increase its padding or change hand and wrist position frequently.

Neck and Back

The cyclist usually adopts a bent-over posture that can result in neck and lower back pain. Symptoms can be alleviated by shortening the handlebar reach and tipping the saddle up by an angle of 10 to 15 degrees from the horizontal position.

Perineum

Prolonged friction between the saddle and perineum can lead to skin breakage and infection. Moisture can hasten the process, hence cycling in wet weather will put cyclists at risk. Mild chafing can be treated with drying talcum powders or lubricants such as petroleum jelly. Topical or oral antibiotics may be needed if the skin is infected. Preventive measures include wearing padded chamois shorts and using a more cushioned saddle.

Knee

Knee injuries are the most common overuse injuries in cyclists. Constant rubbing of the iliotibial band (a connective tissue along the thigh) over the lower thighbone can cause pain at the outer knee. Rapid increase in training volume and intensity, excessive uphill cycling and cycling at higher gears can trigger the problem. Stretching and massage of the iliotibial band can help relieve pain. Make sure toes point forward, not outward on the pedal. Pain at the front of the knee can be due to misalignment of the kneecap as it moves against the thigh bone. This may be due to long cranks (the arm connecting the pedal to the sprocket) and a saddle that is too low and forward. Strengthen weak quadriceps and remember to stretch a tight iliotibial band.

Foot

Incorrect positioning of the shoes on the pedals and lack of cushioning can lead to foot problems such as pain over the ball of the foot, which should be in line with the middle of the pedal. Specialised insoles with forefoot padding can alleviate pain. Numbness and tingling in the soles can result from pressure exerted on the nerves between the toes. This is usually due to narrow and tight cycling shoes. Loosen the straps on the shoes or wear a pair with a wider toe-box. You may choose to invest in specialised cycling shoes that have stiff soles with cleats that attach to the pedals.
xercise and health go hand in hand, and these happen to be the two things that Dr Wang Mingchang is most passionate about. After having practised family medicine for four years, he recently embarked on a new journey as an Advanced Specialty Trainee in Sports Medicine.

Are family and sports medicines complementary? Sports and exercise are vital for healthy ageing and chronic disease management, and as more Singaporeans participate in sports, sports injury rates will go up. I think it’s important for family physicians to have sports medicine knowledge.

How did your interest in sports medicine start? It started in junior college where I was an instructor in the health and fitness club. I found it rewarding teaching others to exercise safely, give rehabilitation advice for injuries, and help obese students meet their fitness goals.

In your move to sports medicine, what training will you be undergoing? I’ll be starting on the three-year Sports Medicine Advanced Specialty Training Programme. It involves clinical rotations at sites such as the Singapore Sports Institute. I’ll also train at sports medicine units in other hospitals.

Part of your work now is at the NUH Sports Centre. Tell us more about it. The Sports Centre sees patients with injuries or ailments that make it difficult for them to enjoy their sport. We also see patients with chronic diseases and provide other services like health appraisals, surgery, physiotherapy and acupuncture. This year, the Sports Centre is also supporting the OCBC Cycle 2015, and we’re offering pre- and post-event consultations to participants. During the event, we’ll help with on-site medical coverage.

Can you share about the Centre’s collaboration with Team NUS, the varsity sports team? This is a new collaboration and I’ve been tasked to be the physician for Team NUS. I’m also working on injury prevention programmes for team managers and coaches of higher-risk sports like rugby and football. When the new semester starts, I plan to hold talks for athletes on topics such as sports psychology and nutrition.

What’s the best part of your job? I love being able to learn from a multidisciplinary sports team.