

The Sweetness of Happiness

by Dr Mumtaz Mohamed Yusoff, Tampines Polyclinic

As I sat in front of a panel of interviewers for my medical school interview with my heart racing, one of them asked, "You have already gone through so much in life, are you sure you want to put yourself through more hardships by going through medical school and becoming a doctor?" I replied, "Maybe my past experiences will only make me better prepared for more hardships because, you see, hardships build resilience." A few weeks later, I received news that I was accepted into NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

During my PSLE, my mum decided to run away from home with three small children in tow – my two older brothers and me. She was running away from an emotionally abusive

relationship with my father. She was running away from poverty and constant harassments from loan sharks. In short, she was in the pursuit of happiness, not for herself, but for her children. We shuttled between different relatives houses for 6 months before we managed to obtain our own 1-room rental flat. We lived like this for a long time, the 4 of us squeezed in a small space we call home with my mother's meagre salary from her work as a housekeeper.

But we were happy. We could not afford most things and we were on financial assistance but we no longer have loan

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Interview with Dr Elaine Chua

Childhood Development Screening 2020

- A Sneak Preview

What is the vision of Childhood Development Screening (CDS) 2020?

As family physicians, we aim to provide continuity of care for not just the patient alone, but the patient's family members as well. It is a wondrous joy to be introduced to the new grandchild of a long-term elderly patient or the new baby of a younger patient, and to be able to continue caring for all members of the patient's family across the spectrum of ages.

New CHAS subsidies planned to be rolled out by the last quarter of 2020 is an enabler for family physicians to play the active role in childhood developmental surveillance, so that deviations can be detected and managed without delay. The vision of CDS 2020 is to have a childhood surveillance system that is thorough, with minimum touch points and to maximize the opportunities to pick up deviations from normal.

What is our mission?

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has engaged the College of Family Physicians (CFPS) via a weekend refresher course scheduled mid-July 2020 to help practitioners familiarize with new progress in the study of childhood normalcy, in

growth and development. This is so that we can recognize when deviations occur and guide parents with appropriate advice. Common and single domain deviations identified during the surveillance can be followed up and if they persist, will be referred for further opinion and management.

Finer details of vaccinations will also be revised so that we can be confident in our prescriptions. The course plans to cover available local resources for physicians and patient's families to tap on. We also hope to touch on practical directions with regards to data submission and other administrative requirements of the CDS program, pending confirmation by MOH.

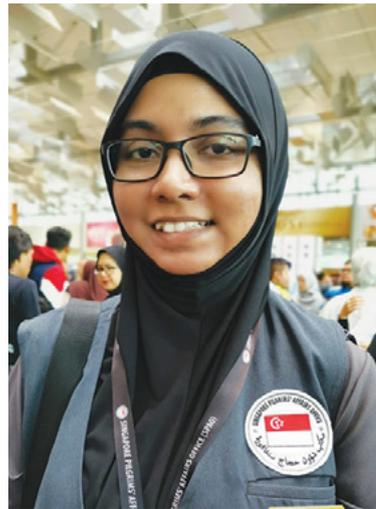
What are its objectives?

At the same time as rolling out the CDS program, subsidized vaccines at the designated family physician's clinic will allow more cohesive care and we should take the opportunity to observe beyond the child's current physical well-being.

Longitudinal care of the family opens many possibilities for the family physician to observe family dynamics, and opportune moments to inculcate good long-term health habits early and via sustained education. The long-term goal is to influence all members of the community towards improved well-being, starting as individual family units.

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sharks threatening us or throwing paint at our doors. We were able to sleep in peace, eat in peace and live in peace.

However, seeing my mother struggle to raise the 3 of us, the only way I knew to repay her was to study hard and try to get us out from the vicious cycle of poverty. It was a long and arduous journey. I almost gave up applying for medical school as I could not afford the fees. But I decided that my social background should not deprive me of an education. I managed to obtain a scholarship as well as a bank loan to aid me in paying for my medical school fees.

It's been 5 years into my career as a doctor. It can be physically and mentally exhausting but I have never regretted choosing this path. At the end of the day, no matter how exhausted I am, every experience as a doctor has been humbling. From your first day as a houseman, your first call, your first death case, your first mistake, your first thank-you note to your first experience with a global pandemic, these experiences shape you not only as a doctor but also as a person.

In 2019, I participated in a medical mission to Saudi Arabia for 39 days during the Hajj pilgrimage. With a group of doctors and nurses, we ran clinics in various parts of the country for our Singaporean pilgrims. I've never felt more like a doctor than I did during the mission. We saw various

conditions just like the patients in the polyclinics. We worked under harsh conditions with very little sleep but it was satisfying to see the patients improve after a few follow ups, knowing that you had a part to play in their recovery so that they can continue their worship. It was an eye opening and unforgettable experience for me and it strengthened my resolve to pursue a career in Family Medicine. Family Medicine allows me to be a part of a patient's health journey for long term which was something I was highly interested in.



I am currently pursuing a Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM) and have recently started working at Tampines Polyclinic this year. I hope to continue pursuing a career in Family Medicine for as long as I am able.

Hardships are inevitable but necessary. We will only be able to taste the true sweetness of happiness after having gone through the bitterness of hardships. Use hardships as a tool to build grit and resilience because you are defined by the strength of your character, not by your wealth, your status or social circumstances.

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