



COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS
SINGAPORE

THE College Mirror

VOL. 46 NO. 4 DEC 2020



Dr Julia Yuen (third from left), with her coursemates (from left) Dr Lifeng, Dr Meykkumar and Dr Haidee.

The College Mirror is delighted to have recent graduands of the Fellowship programme and MMed(FM) College Programme share their personal journeys and valuable insights that they have experienced during the course of the programmes.

We wish all graduands the best in their endeavours and hope that they continue to inspire!

My Fellowship Journey

Dr Yuen Sok Wei Julia

Looking back at the last 2 years of my Fellowship journey, I feel truly blessed and thankful for the numerous learning opportunities, friendships and kinship. I still recall the day I submitted my Fellowship application. I wanted to challenge and better myself as a Family Physician (FP). Yet concurrently, I heard of accounts from seniors and peers about the challenging journey ahead. I could not help but feel slightly intimidated. I bit the bullet, submitted my application and tried not to second guess my decision. Two years on, I'm glad to have made that decision. The Fellowship programme equips one with skills for clinicals, research and pedagogy. I felt that it also gave me opportunities to have a better world view of Family Medicine as a practice across the various settings through thought-provoking discussions and interactions with other FPs.

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At the beginning, I was very apprehensive when faced with journal critique. Attending the Asia Pacific Evidence – Based Medicine and Nursing (APEBMN) Workshop and Conference with other specialty trainees from various other institutions, I remember feeling stressed and anxious at knowing so little. However, with regular practice through self-directed and peer-learning, my confidence in journal critique began to grow. In writing up the complex cases, I revised and added to my medical knowledge. This was further built upon and strengthened through discussions with seniors and peers. Also, I saw my research project from start to end, picking up skills and knowledge along the way. I learnt about generating ideas from day to day problems encountered in practice, the importance of good literature review, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and grant application processes, carrying out the research and collating the data, writing the report and finally aiming for publication. Each step was a learning experience in itself. I'm grateful to have many wonderful mentors who guided me along the way. They took time to conduct tutorials for EBM, clinical cases as well as for professionalism and ethics. A mock examination was also organised to help in our preparation. All their constructive feedback was very helpful in refining the logbook write-ups as well as improving presentation skills for the viva.

This journey would not have been possible without the support from family and my peers. My family was a constant source of encouragement, spurring me on through challenging periods. I could always look to my study group mates Haidee, Lifeng, Meykkumar and Rose for support and discussion of any doubts. We met regularly to practice clerking complex cases prior to the clinical exams. I also met up with my clinical group mate Aysha to practice in the community hospital setting. After clearing the clinical exam, we continued these regular sessions leading up to the final viva. We had to switch from physical meetups to Zoom sessions when the Covid pandemic hit. I will always remember the countless sessions we had pouring over the various types of papers, sparring and critiquing each other's research as well as clinical cases and finally, discussing ethical dilemmas and professionalism topics.

As much as it was a great learning experience, the more knowledge I gained, the more I realise there is to know. It has been truly humbling. This is just the beginning of another chapter as learning never ceases. It has certainly been a challenging journey, but I'm glad that I've gained knowledge for better patient care, built up resilience, forged relationships and created memories that will last a long time to come.

Dr Ngai Qian Yi

My fellowship journey was a rather atypical one and interrupted by a deferment. It was by God's grace alone that I completed it. It was difficult to keep the momentum going after the deferment, and being a polyclinic locum compounded the problem as I had to remain task-committed without official institutional support. I am thus grateful to my supervisors Dr Adrian Tan Kok Heng, Dr Angelia Chua Hwee Ling and Dr Derek Lim Chi-Kien for their unwavering support and encouragement. I am also indebted to many mentors, seniors and peers who helped me in their personal capacities, such as Dr Hu Pei Lin who gave me advice and logistical support for my research, and Dr Liu Changwei who faithfully practised the journal critique with me. I thank God for the many angels He sent my way.

The FCFP(S) is a significant milestone in our continuous journeys to improve as a family physicians. I had hoped to further my interests in home care and medical education through the systematic programme and professional

qualifications the FCFP(S) afforded. Although my career path took a bend midway, the clinical, research and pedagogical skills learnt would serve as a springboard to kickstart the next phase of my medical journey. The course also facilitated the intellectual exchange of ideas with family medicine colleagues and allowed the development of friendships that would last a lifetime.

To my other family medicine colleagues who may be thinking of embarking on this journey. I would encourage you to have a clear goal in mind that would keep you anchored to stay the course regardless of the storms. For those who may have a lack of formal institutional support, I would pass on the advice of Dr Ng Lee Beng, the former programme director. "Do not be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help." Many in our fraternity are willing to pay forward favours they have received themselves; and this is a reflection of the apprenticeship nature of our profession, as laid out in the Hippocratic oath.

Dr Grace Shu Hui Chiang



I currently practice at St Luke's Hospital and hope to be able to contribute as a change agent within the ILTC (Intermediate and Long-Term Care) sector. The mentorship embedded

in the Fellowship programme has been essential in enabling me to grow professionally as a better communicator, collaborator, manager and scholar. With the appreciation that the identification of care needs is driven by the individuality of the patient, I have been able to utilize the knowledge and skills learnt during the programme to encourage ILTC centres to take up an active role as ideal centres to promote multidisciplinary and cross-setting collaborations, to develop a distinct "outreach" philosophy, and to strengthen links between primary and secondary care to further Singapore's vision of ageing-in-place.

While the Fellowship journey was challenging, I was fortunate to have an amazing support system both professionally and personally. This achievement was through the collective effort of wonderful mentors, seniors and fellow FCFP compatriots. I would like to thank my inspirational mentors who have journeyed with me since the very first day of FM residency, A/Profs Tan Boon Yeow, Goh Lee Gan, Cheong Pak Yean and Dr Ong Chooi Peng. They laid the ground for my foundation in FM and continue to inspire me to be a better family physician. My dedicated FCFP supervisors Drs Meena Sundram and Low Lian Leng. My amazing seniors in St Luke's Hospital, A/Prof Tan, Drs Chong Tsung Wei and Linus Chua who sacrificed their time to tutor my awesome study buddy Andrea Tan and I during weekday evenings and even on weekends; and Dr Jeffrey Jiang for his invaluable FCFP advice and notes. My supportive bosses Drs Chia Tee Hian and Andrew Samson for their encouragement. And most importantly, thanks to God and my family for their unfailing support.

My advice to those currently going through fellowship or considering pursuing Fellowship is to persevere and "Just Do It". Though passing the fellowship exams is important, do not fear the exams; appreciate and enjoy the learning process instead.

THE 27TH COUNCIL WISHES ALL A

*Merry
Christmas*
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Though family physicians in Singapore can and have made great strides within Singapore's healthcare ecosystem, we need a culture and a set of norms to support successful ageing. Perceptions such as specialists being better than family physicians or end-of-life discussions being taboo topics are norms in Singapore's healthcare that need to change. Active dialogue and public education will be needed to foster new norms in an ageing population. The fellowship experience can offer trainees a wealth of skills and knowledge in tackling adaptive challenges, pursuing a holistic approach to ageing, taking a systems approach to the organization and delivery of care, developing clinical research skills, and gaining a greater appreciation and understanding of patient-centric care. Armed with these skills, future family physicians can and will be able to continue to deliver quality healthcare and shape Singapore's healthcare ecosystem.

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Dr Cheah Ming Hann

I took up the Fellowship course hoping to develop myself further as a family physician. The patients today are more complex as our population ages and family medicine has been entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining health in the community as part of the government's 3 Beyonds. The programme offered a structured curriculum to train under esteemed mentors and I do feel better equipped as a family physician leader in advocating for my patients, communicating evidenced based care while coordinating various services as they navigate our increasingly complex health ecosystem.



Dr Cheah Ming Hann and his family.

Just like most people, I found it challenging to juggle family, work and learning. I didn't know how stressed I was till the exams were over and this huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. There was also the uncertainty that came with COVID but my wife and parents were huge pillars of support. Leisure time was well spent with family and friends (both

old and new ones made through this learning journey). I was blessed with dedicated tutors who encouraged me during difficult periods and helped immensely in meeting deadlines. Towards the weeks leading to the exam, we buddied up and studied/sparred together. My institution (NUP) also organized mock exam sessions and research tutorials to get us in shape.

Dr Wong Peng Yong Andrew

I pursued FCFP in 2017 after completing MMed(FM) when I joined Bright Vision Community Hospital. As a newly minted registrar then, I desired for higher and structured FM training so that I can acquire essential skillsets of a generalist leader to drive positive change for my patients, fellow FM learners and the public.



Dr Andrew Wong and his family

institution, sparring with fellow colleagues across Zoom® with face masks at unearthly hours and receiving pearls of wisdom from our seniors and supervisors during FCFP tutorials.

I was initially disappointed when I was unsuccessful in my first exam attempt. However, handling failures turned out to be an important quality which I realised was necessary as a leader. What made me decide shortly to reattempt were

Through FCFP, I learnt how to read (appraising articles), write (clinical cases, research manuscript), deliver effective presentations, plan projects (research, FM review course), craft pedagogical assessments and navigate difficult ethical and contemporary issues. Constant self-directed learning and reflection on what could be done better in my practice and the healthcare system proved to be very helpful to me as a junior leader.

Many memories I brought back include planning for the annual FM review course from scratch, conducting a research study on deprescribing rounds within my

the words of encouragement by A/Prof Lim Fong Seng (examiner at my first attempt), A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock (my boss) and A/Prof Goh Lee Gan (who conducted my first exam debrief). Prof Goh's words "This is not a failure - you are just not ready for success yet" had helped me greatly both in this FCFP journey, work challenges and allowed me to motivate fellow trainees and even patients who encounter initial difficulties in their trials.

My thank-you list is long. First, my wife has been a great pillar of support to me during the entire journey, caring

A huge shoutout to my wife Gladys, both my parents for holding the fort and my son Raphael for entertaining us with his endless antics. My clinic head Dr Franco for his insights on leadership, Drs Kelvin Koh and Alvin Ong from JCH for all those night Zoom sessions on ethics, and group tutors Drs Adrian and Angela for their tireless patience. A journey is best measured in friends and all this would have been many times tougher without awesome group mates to keep one another going.

Highlights and Memorable Moments

I thoroughly enjoyed my 6-month stint working in JCH as part of NUP's training programme. Firm friendships were forged with the wonderful colleagues there and I could better appreciate the role of a family physician in transitional care. The pedagogy segment was also over all too soon and I had a lot of fun trying to formulate questions that were stimulating yet relevant.

for our 3 boys and managing the home, especially during the exam preparations. Also, I am particularly appreciative of my colleagues, CFPS seniors, FCFP supervisors and my 2019 & 2020 course-mates who took time to scrutinize the written work and perform mock viva voce to enhance articulation, tenacity and personal reflection. Thank you everyone!

Looking back, without higher training, I may have remained a GP who was very comfortable with managing my patients in my own way and earning my keep within fixed hours. The journey from GDFM to FCFP, though long, enabled me to forge many close friendships and mentorships. This training also expanded my world view of FM, its importance in current affairs (e.g. Silver Tsunami, War on Diabetes, Emerging communicable diseases) and exposed me to its work in various (even less conventional) settings and at different levels of mastery. Stepping out my comfort zone and constantly seeking opportunities to use the skills I have learnt remains my greatest take-home from FCFP - be it at a disease, person or systems level.

On the Exams conducted via videoconferencing

To be honest, I was not sure how I did and the 1-hour interview flew by quickly. There were some unexpected questions though rigorous preparation helps one think quickly on your feet. Zoom also made it difficult to read the expressions of examiners and try to discern what they were looking for in my answers.

Otherwise I would say to enjoy the journey ahead and not focus too much over the exam as the skills gained will serve you (and your patients) in good stead regardless. The end will take care of itself.

One of the lifelong lessons I have learnt: To approach new experiences with an open, positive mind and be intentional in applying learnt skills in daily work rather than just for exams.

Dr Wong Wei Teen

A tough journey with narrow bends
Oh that does not cause us to swerve
Supported much by helping hands
Forgetting not the call to serve

True fellowship beyond a ring
Builds on relationships so deep
Go forth still, heartfelt joy to bring-
Mount Fellowship, thou not so steep

So comrades, upkeep thy spirits
Persevere in doing good works
Mentors rendered wisdom and wits
Humanities gave space for quirks

We are only human, indeed
Yet, privileged to care and give
Unto humanity in need
Let us with soul lenses perceive

In togetherness, we achieve
In solemn moments, undeterred
In family, hope and belief
Our banner of courage unfurled