

Honouring Outstanding Contributions

The SMA Honorary Memberships and SMA Merit Awards are traditionally given out during the Annual Dinner. Despite the dinner's cancellation this year, the Association is proud to confer on Prof Chee Yam Cheng and Prof Phua Kong Boo the SMA Honorary Memberships – the highest honour that SMA bestows on individuals with significant contributions. The SMA Merit Awards were also presented to five well-deserving doctors. Congratulations to all our recipients!

SMA Honorary Membership

Citation for Prof Chee Yam Cheng

Text by A/Prof Chin Jing Jih

Once in a long while, the medical profession is gifted with an unusually talented and well-rounded doctor, who is not only a master clinician and an accomplished teacher, but also a visionary leader and systems developer. The recipient of this year's SMA Honorary Membership, Prof Chee Yam Cheng, is one such exceptional doctor who has left an indelible influence on patients, the profession and the healthcare system.



Respected leader and clinician

Prof Chee graduated with MBBS from the University of Singapore in 1973. As a young doctor, Prof Chee was already showing his leadership qualities as an advocate for doctors' development, welfare and rights. He was president of the doctors' union – the Singapore Government Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Officers' Association – in the early 1980s and negotiated for salaries, bonuses, allowances, leave and benefits with the Public Service Division. His talent was soon recognised and he was transferred and entrusted to serve at the Ministry of Health headquarters. Over the years, he held various important appointments and responsibilities such as Director of Medical Manpower (1988-1992) and Deputy Director of Medical Services (1996-1998), and served as Director on the Boards of the National University Hospital, National Kidney Foundation Singapore, Changi General Hospital and the National Neuroscience Institute. He also held numerous committees covering areas such as clinical services and clinical standards, service standards, administration, teaching and training research, technology, and healthcare policy.

At Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), Prof Chee took on various leadership roles, becoming its first Chairman Medical Board (CMB) in 1991, when he charted and led the hospital in its restructuring process. He was then appointed Chairman, Division of Ambulatory and Diagnostic Care from 1998 to 2000, before serving a second term as CMB from 2000 to 2003. Under his leadership, TTSH gradually established its reputation for quality and service

excellence, earning recognition both locally and internationally. Prof Chee then went on to assume cluster level leadership roles, becoming Assistant Chief Executive Officer (Clinical) of the National Healthcare Group (NHG) in 2003 and Group CEO of NHG in 2011. As Group CEO, he was instrumental in steering the cluster through its transition into becoming the Regional Health System (RHS) for Central Singapore. Under his leadership, NHG became the primary clinical training partner for the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine in August 2013. In 2014, he was conferred the title of Emeritus Consultant by TTSH, in recognition of his lifetime contribution to the hospital, and his exemplary role modelling to the young doctors.

Since relinquishing his role as Group CEO, NHG in January 2015, Prof Chee has been appointed as NHG's inaugural Senior Advisor under the prestigious NHG Board of Advisors Scheme, where he continues to support the NHG leadership to drive strategic initiatives, while leveraging on his vast clinical expertise and experience to mentor, coach and help groom NHG's leadership pipeline as the President of NHG College. Since 2015, Prof Chee has also been serving as Senior Advisor to the Primary Care Transformation Office where he has helped, with much success, to drive the transformation of care delivery model in all NHG Polyclinics.

Throughout his career, Prof Chee took an active interest in postgraduate training and was the Chairman of the Internal Medicine Specialist Training Committee since 1998 and member of the Joint Committee on Specialist Training and Specialist Accreditation Board, dealing with training in Internal Medicine. He was also Master of the Academy of Medicine from 1998 to 2000.

He has won numerous awards such as the Pingat Perkhidmatan Awam (Silver) 1991, Long Service Medal 1999, Public Service Medal (Ministry of

Defence) 2006, Public Administration Medal (Gold) 2006, and the Lee Foundation-NG Lifetime Achievement Award 2007, just to name a few.

Furthering the profession

Beyond his many clinical and academic achievements, and his awards and appointments at the national and professional level, Prof Chee is widely admired and fondly regarded by colleagues, juniors and students for the leader and mentor that he is. He is a visionary leader who believes in adopting a systems view in tackling and solving healthcare problems. Never contented with just helping the patients in his practice, it is clear from his deliberations at the meetings he chairs or participates in that his big picture and deeper aspirations are always to create durable and sustainable systems that will consistently and reliably bring benefit not just to a few, but to most patients who use the public healthcare system.

As a clinician, Prof Chee Yam Cheng is respected for his commitment to holistic care. In the early 1990s, he foresaw the distant icebergs of the rapidly ageing population and the emerging healthcare needs of seniors with multiple co-morbidities. He became a champion for general medicine and geriatric medicine and led the Department of General Medicine at TTSH from 1992 to 2001. Through his great foresight and vision, each of our restructured acute hospitals today has a Department of General Medicine that works closely with various specialties and subspecialties. This has significantly enabled our hospitals to avoid the kind of care fragmentation for the elderly seen in many developed countries. As an accomplished internal medicine specialist, Prof Chee has led by example and continues to retain his breadth of practice, running general medical clinics at TTSH, the Institute of Mental Health and the women's side of KK Women's and Children's Hospital.

Another of Prof Chee's legacies is the excellent system of undergraduate and postgraduate training that he has helped build in Singapore. He is a devoted educator who strongly believes that the resilience of the profession and healthcare system lies in investing and developing future generations of doctors equipped with the correct values, appropriate skills and adaptability to change. Today, he continues to participate in the teaching and training of medical students, residents and senior residents, and serves as examiner for MBBS and postgraduate MRCP Practical Assessment of Clinical Examination Skills. Whenever he reads a good journal article, he would send a copy to those he feels would benefit from reading it. Some of us may also recall that Prof Chee was the determined historian who tirelessly chronicled the local experience and lessons learnt during the SARS outbreak in 2003 over a total of 13 articles published over 15 months (from March 2003 to May 2004) in *SMA News*. Indeed, Prof Chee believes that the medical profession needs to accurately chronicle our major events, whether good or bad, so that future generations can learn from history and past experiences. This is yet another illustration of Prof Chee's diligence in passing down wisdom and experience to the next generation, so that his hindsight becomes our foresight in the next challenge we face.

Prof Chee is also known for his signature style of communication and conducting meetings, which reflects his belief that time is precious and waits for no man. A typical meeting or conversation with him usually consists of very few words from him; he gets straight to the point after a few key and pointed questions, invariably in an almost expressionless demeanour. If he is satisfied with your answers, they will almost immediately be translated into an action plan, and possibly deadlines. Time wasting is not in his genes.

Although he is a man of few words, his pearls of wisdom are much sought

after and he has been invited to deliver many keynote lectures, such as the first College of Physicians Lecture on "The Role of Internal Medicine as a Specialty in the Era of Subspecialisation"; the Sreenivasan Oration on "Family Practice of the 21st Century: Computers, Changes & Challenges" at the College of Family Physicians Singapore; and the SMA Lecture on "Do No Harm, Do Thyself no Harm". His lectures are usually peppered with deadpan humour, something we have learnt to expect and enjoy.

A man of many talents and abilities

One of the much-whispered folklore about Prof Chee is his much-revered photographic memory and mental processing power, which has often been compared to a mainframe computer. Some claim that this is why he has never been seen carrying a camera or taking any photos with his smartphone. There's just no need to, for he apparently remembers every name, voice and face, after only one encounter. Although this struck fear in many doctors when he was the Deputy Director of Medical Services in charge of manpower and junior doctors' postings, it must be said that the distribution of postings was generally fair, reasonable, even compassionate. But this mental prowess probably accounted for another of his legendary achievements – when he was a young doctor undecided on his choice of specialty, and was contemplating primary care for his medical career, he went ahead and passed all three primary examinations of the Royal College – the MRCP part 1, FRCS part 1 and MRCOG part 1, within a short period of time. It is this same capacious memory and intelligence which serves him well both as a physician and clinician leader.

But beyond all these superlatives, Prof Chee is, in my humble view, deeply respected because he embodies the fundamental professional values and spirit of the medical profession. Known for his no-nonsense approach towards

upholding professional standards and integrity, his appointment as President of the Singapore Medical Council in 2019 was welcomed with open arms by most within the medical profession and healthcare family. Beneath his straight-faced and seemingly unemotional and clinical approach towards problem-solving, is a doctor with a big heart – kind, helpful and compassionate – always ready to stretch out a helping hand, and always aiming to do what is right.

Indeed, Prof Chee is a man of many talents and abilities, and he has been unselfishly dedicating his time and energy to public healthcare for the last 47 years. He has always talked about retirement, but he never actually retires, as he is still a very much sought-after wise man to chair and advise numerous national level task forces, workgroups and committees. Prof Chee recharges and maintains the balance in his life by reading, playing the piano, attending to his birds and fishes at home, and spending time with his lovely wife, a retired junior college teacher, and two grown up children – one a lawyer and the other a teacher.

It gives me great honour and pleasure to present to you our great clinician, mentor and leader, Professor Chee Yam Cheng, SMA Honorary Member 2020.

SMA Honorary Membership

Citation for

Prof Phua Kong Boo

Text by Prof Chay Oh Moh

Prof Phua Kong Boo is an exemplary clinician, and a role model of the highest standard of professionalism and integrity in his practice. He ensures the highest standard of quality of care to all his patients, whether they are under private, subsidised or team care. He is inspirational as a clinician, having made significant impact and contributions in both education and research. He is a teacher and mentor par excellence and has inspired and contributed to the education and training of many generations of healthcare professionals. As a clinician researcher, he was involved in pivotal international studies which helped to bring the rotavirus vaccine to millions of children around the world.

Prof Phua began his education in Chung Cheng High School in Singapore, before heading to Australia where he attended the Brisbane Grammar School. Following which he stayed on and completed his MBBS at the University of Queensland, where he was a guest speaker at their graduation celebration in 2006. After returning to Singapore, Prof Phua attained his Master of Medicine in Paediatrics at the University of Singapore (now National University of Singapore [NUS]) in 1971, and was admitted as a Fellow of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore in 1975. He continued his pursuit of medical excellence and attained Fellowships from the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Royal College of Physicians (Edinburgh) and the Royal College of Physician and Child Health.

A clinician of excellence

As a clinician, Prof Phua is inspirational as he continues to be fully committed to clinical work and maintaining a high standard and productivity up to this day.

He is a most committed paediatric gastroenterologist who steadfastly helmed the service in KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH). This became one of the subspecialties which was never short of interested trainees who wanted to learn under his tutelage. Many of them went on to be successful gastroenterologists contributing both to institutional practice and in the community.

Currently Emeritus Consultant in KKH, Dr Phua has been dedicated to paediatrics since joining the hospital in 1997. He was appointed Clinical Head of Department of Paediatrics, then Head of Department of Paediatrics in 1999. This was a difficult time. He had to navigate the challenges of the new Department of Paediatric Medicine in KKH which was not an easy task as the team had consisted of paediatricians and nurses coming together from three different hospitals: Singapore General Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Alexandra Hospital. The culture and aspirations were quite different. It was a challenging time but with his commitment, humility and fairness, he was able to gel the team to move forward and set the catalyst for the development to a strong Academic Clinical Paediatric Programme today.



For his outstanding clinical practice, he was conferred the GCEO Excellence Award in 2009 and appointed Emeritus Consultant in 2016.

A nurturing educator

To the paediatrics community, Prof Phua is well known as an excellent teacher to both undergraduate and postgraduate learners. He is actively involved in their teaching and examinations, and is also a nurturing and easily approachable teacher. Medical students and residents alike were inspired by him, and he had helped many of them in initiating their journey in clinical research.

Since being appointed as a clinical teacher by NUS in 1972, Prof Phua has set up teaching programmes for NUS medical students posted to the

various restructured hospitals' paediatric departments, and he acts as an advisor as well as assists in the students' elective postings locally and abroad. Prof Phua is also heavily involved in the paediatric teaching curriculum. Not only does he conduct lectures and clinical teaching for medical students from the NUS Yong Yoo Lin School of Medicine, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and Duke-NUS Medical School, but he also helps to modify and improve the curriculum for the betterment of future medical education.

For his outstanding contributions to undergraduate education, Prof Phua was recognised for his teaching excellence and conferred the title of Adjunct Professor of all three medical schools in Singapore. He has an excellent record as an educator, garnering awards such as the Yong Loo Lin-NUS Role Model Teacher's Award in 2012, and the Yong Loo Lin Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence multiple times over the years. In 2015, Prof Phua was nominated as an excellent role model by graduating students, and awarded the Yong Loo Lin Special Recognition Award.

A passionate researcher

Apart from his active contributions to education, Prof Phua has also made an impact on the research front. His main research interests include obstructive jaundice in infancy, childhood hepatitis, rotavirus infections and the epidemiology of intussusception.

A lesser-known fact about Prof Phua is that he was the Primary Investigator (PI) of the largest Phase IIb trial of the rotavirus vaccine. As the PI, he coordinated the Phase III trial in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 2004, the World Health Organization invited him to share his findings at the Initiative for Vaccine Research's Global Vaccine Research Forum in Switzerland, from 8 to 10 June 2004. This is a distinguished honour which few specialists have had the opportunity to



emulate. The outcome of this sharing was instrumental in expediting the availability of the rotavirus vaccine to millions of children today.

Prof Phua is an exemplary role model of an academic clinician, who, with no protected time for research, has contributed significantly to clinical research and published more than 50 scientific articles in esteemed peer-reviewed journals. He is also a well sought-after speaker for topics on gastroenteritis, obstructive jaundice, biliary atresia and numerous others in gastroenterology. Prof Phua has also combined his passion for education and research, encouraging medical students under his supervision to pursue short clinical research with the aim of presenting them in conferences.

Giving back to the community

Despite his busy schedule, Prof Phua sets aside time to contribute back to the community, sitting on various committees and societies.

He is a strong advocate for vulnerable children and children with special needs. He has been a long-serving member of the Singapore Children's Society

since 1994, being a member on both subcommittees for Convalescent Home and Child Abuse. As a member of the Advisory Board, as well as medical advisor for Club Rainbow, Prof Phua plays a critical role in managing the charity along with the other members. He helped to facilitate the travel and dream holidays of children with chronic illness by providing medical support. He also shares his expertise with caregivers through seminars and talks. All this he does in his own time and at his own expense.

Apart from his dedication to children with special needs, Prof Phua is also the Chairman of the Endoscopy section of the KKH Medical Procedures Accreditation Committee. Prior to that, he chaired the KKH Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee from 2001 to 2014, and acted as an advisor after that. Prof Phua also currently co-chairs the KKH Medication Assistance Fund Plus panel.

With all these distinguished and extraordinary achievements, and many more, Prof Phua is a true role model of an exemplary clinician with outstanding contributions in both medical research and education, and in the community. He is indeed an outstanding member of the medical community.

SMA Merit Awards

Inaugurated in 2003, the SMA Merit Awards are presented annually in recognition of the recipients' significant contributions to the SMA and medical profession, social service to the community, or commendable personal achievements. Award recipients may be SMA Members, doctors, or non-medical professionals. This year, five recipients were awarded the SMA Merit Award.

Dr Cheng Heng Kock

has made significant contributions to the paediatrics sector and healthcare over the past fifty years. He started and headed Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) Paediatrics Department in 1975, before it transferred over to KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH). His vision and prudence helped to lay the foundation and steered KKH to be among the best in women's and children's health. He also led the younger generation of paediatricians by example with his pioneering spirit in the creation of the children's emergency service and dedication to serve the community.



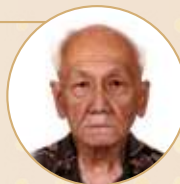
Dr Kwek Seow Khee

Daniel has served on and contributed to the SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism (SMA CMEP) as a lecturer for the past 16 years of SMA CMEP's 20-year history. Through SMA's Advanced Specialty Training course, he has taught literally thousands of doctors about understanding and managing their emotions in professional work, and has been an advocate for physician self-wellness when that was barely known. Dr Kwek was also Head of Psychological Medicine at TTSH.



Dr Edward Pang Chee Ping

is an anaesthetist with immense contributions to the anaesthesiology sector for over 40 years. He was head of KKH's anaesthesia department from 1979 to 1988, and held other leadership positions including the Chairman of the Chapter of Anaesthetists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore, and President, College of Anaesthesiologists, Singapore. Dr Pang also served on the Gleneagles Hospital's Medical Advisory Board for 16 years, and was awarded the Pingat Bakti Masyarakat for his rescue work in the Hotel New World collapse in 1986.



Dr Ng Han Seong

has been teaching generations of medical students and young doctors for more than four decades, and has made significant contributions to the field of gastroenterology and hepatology. Dr Ng was also Chairman, Medical Board of Singapore General Hospital for six years. His nurturing and mentoring of many young doctors ensured that Singapore will have many capable doctors to continue the excellent healthcare that we currently see here.



Dr Wong Sin Yew

has been an infectious disease physician with significant contributions to the sector for more than two decades. His relevant knowledge and experience have definitely been a huge asset during the current COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, Dr Wong championed workplace safety and health issues, and served as SMA's representative to the Workplace Safety and Health Council (Healthcare Committee) from 2014 to 2019. Dr Wong was previously Head of Department of Infectious Diseases at TTSH and Clinical Director of the Communicable Disease Centre. He also served two terms as an elected member of the Singapore Medical Council. ♦

