

Pathology: The Science Of Medicine

Text by Dr Tan Yia Swam

Never let it be said that pathologists are boring people without humour. While planning this issue, Cuthbert, Jipson and I had loads of fun and laughter. The serious bit was how to introduce this speciality to the general medical community and students. Prof Tan Puay Hoon, Chairman of Division of Pathology, SGH and her team were able to pen the feature article to give an overview of the main sub-specialities within pathology. A/Prof Tan Soo Yong, Chairman of the RAC (Residency Advisory Committee) for Anatomical Pathology was also invited, but unfortunately he was not able to make time to write. In addition, the three

programme directors from Singapore Health Services, National Healthcare Group and National University Health System comment on their residency programmes and provide some tips on what they feel makes a suitable pathology trainee. The fun bits were in trying to decide on a title, laughing at puns, and me having to confess what goes through my mind during tumour board reviews (see page 29). Pathologists – have fun reading the slides! The rest of us, squint a bit, have a shot of your favourite poison (if you take alcohol), and send in your best answers to news@sma.org.sg!

Text by Dr Jipson Quah

Whenever I mention “pathology” as my specialty of choice, many of my colleagues and friends will excitedly ask me about the weird autopsies I have performed or crime scenes I have visited. Forensic pathology, which they have assumed to be my area of practice, is one of the fascinating fields that lie within the broad discipline of pathology. It has an indispensable role in forensic science, brought to life by the intriguing *CSI* television series. In Singapore, the forensic work by Prof Chao Tzee Cheng was crucial in solving numerous high-profile murders and crimes in the region, and also raising the professionalism and regard of local forensic pathology practice.

Pathology is said to be the foundation and science behind medicine, and many famous physicians and surgeons were also renowned pathologists and anatomists. Rudolf Virchow, William Osler, Theodor Billroth, Sir James Paget and Carl von Rokitsky are some of the luminaries who have lent their names

to the numerous eponymous diseases that we know so well today. As the study of diseases evolved, it gave rise to advanced diagnoses, and medical and surgical treatment.

Rudolf Virchow was one of the earliest physicians to study cellular pathology and his student, Julius Cohnheim, subsequently developed histology procedures to study inflammatory processes and pioneered intraoperative frozen section techniques.

Pathology was, in fact, the first specialty practised in Singapore. When Dr George Alexander Finlayson arrived in 1903 to undertake the role of the Municipal Bacteriologist, he also carried out histopathological examinations on tissue specimens and post-mortem autopsies besides treating infectious diseases. Dr Finlayson was later designated as the first Government Pathologist.¹

In this “Doctors in Training” issue, I am indeed honoured to put together,



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Yia Swam
Editor



Dr Jipson Quah is currently a resident in the Department of Histopathology at Singapore General Hospital. He enjoys music-making, fitness-related activities and editorial work in his free time.

Jipson Quah
Guest Editor

with A/Prof Cuthbert Teo’s guidance, a collection of articles on the field of pathology, the training that pathologists undergo and how pathologists contribute to patient diagnoses and management. I hope you find it a fascinating read! ♦

Reference

1. Teo C, Tan A. A Brief History of Pathology and the Chapter of Pathologists. Available at: http://ams.edu.sg/view-pdf.aspx?file=media%5C844_fi_802.pdf&ofile=ChpPAT+Introduction.pdf.