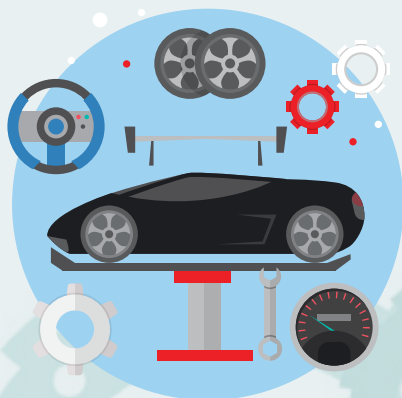


# DO DOCTORS HAVE HOBBIES, STILL?

Text and photos by Dr Tomas Xu

Dr Xu is currently a senior staff registrar working in the Department of Family Medicine, Sengkang Health. He is also an assigned assistant supervisor for MMed (FM) College Programme. He is currently undergoing the Fellowship Programme from the College of Family Physicians Singapore.



## Introduction

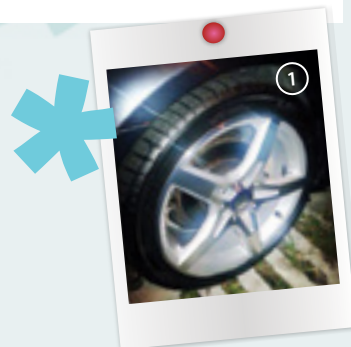
Medical paper writing has become part and parcel of a doctor's training journey. Publication in reputable peer-reviewed journals has become a requisite to career progression and promotion. To some, it gives them a sense of achievement and recognition for the effort put in to write a good article. Having published two articles recently, I now understand the time and effort taken and it makes me wonder whether doctors still have their own personal time to do the things they like. Do doctors still enjoy or even have time for their hobbies? I have been asked to contribute an article on the topic, but instead of the usual standard abstract, let me go ahead with something that is less formal and hopefully I will provide some form of entertainment for our readers. Please pardon my writing as I talk about my hobbies: cars and anime.

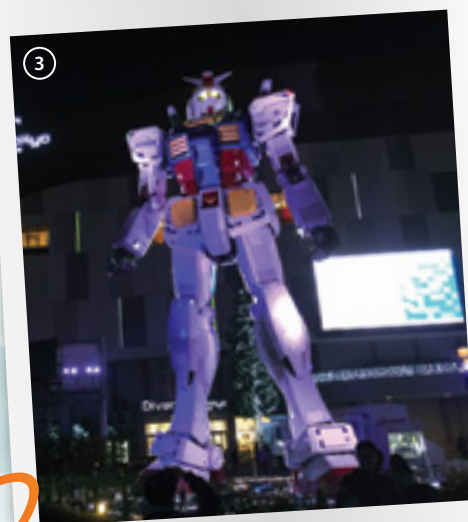
## Car enthusiast

It is indeed a privilege to be able to own a car in Singapore. The convenience of being able to move from point A to B almost without any delays, except when you are caught in a massive traffic jam, provides a smooth daily transition

from my home to the workplace. I was extremely lucky to be able to own my first car, a silver Mazda 6, when I graduated in 2006 – the time when the Certificate of Entitlement rate was at a record low. The car was a gift from myself for passing the MBBS, even though the down payment essentially wiped out 99% of my savings account! While it served its core purpose of conveniently allowing me to reach my workplace at 6.15 am to do my pre-rounds, it also led to my discovery of my love for cars.

In car enthusiasts' terminology, the "poison" was seductive and the first step was to make "aesthetic" modifications: adding a rear spoiler, upsizing and changing to forged rims, and changing the front bumper. After the "aesthetic" enhancements came the "sensorineural hearing loss-inducing" exhaust modifications.





The poison didn't end there and eventually came down to "palpitations" – inducing turbo-modification of the engine. So when the poison finally reached its maximal dose, it was time to change the car! I guess too much "poison" to the mind and wallet led me to my next phase of discovery: convertibles. A two-seater sports car, satisfying the need for speed and audio-visual pleasure, came in the form of a Mercedes SLK 200 with a full AMG Body Kit and 18-inch AMG rims. The pleasure of driving top down, feeling the breeze and getting the desired dose of Vitamin D, can unfortunately be hampered by unexpected showers and the yearly Southeast Asian haze. The convertible journey ended along with news of my wife expecting our first child. Reverting to the convenience of a sedan, my current F80 fulfils all the requirements of any car enthusiast; the 3.0L S55 straight six Twin Turbo with the 7-speed M-DCT transmission gives the acceleration akin to 00 Gundam Raiser Trans-Am mode, the aesthetic beauty of its exterior and interior and the sensorineural hearing loss-inducing exhaust sound when driving in the M-mode.

### Japanese anime

That brings me to my other hobby. Japanese anime has always been a part of my life. It was during my secondary school days that I watched my first anime: *Record of the Lodoss War*. A typical teenager's dream and fantasy: a heroic knight fighting goblins and dragons to save his elf princess from the evil wizard. The artwork of Japanese anime was so mesmerising that I was drawn to it like a moth to a flame. From its mystical fantasy to science fiction genres, anime provided me with a welcomed break from the intensive studying and examination preparations throughout my educational journey. Somehow, the *Gundam* Series became my first-choice anime over the years. I began collecting *Gunpla* (*Gundam* models) and the process of building each *Gunpla* was as exciting as modifying a car. From the simple assembly of the various parts to the airbrush finishing that gives the *Gunpla* the realistic look, the excitement and joy of completing the *Gunpla* and displaying them in my glass cabinet ignited the fire within my soul! The ultimate experience was my visit to DiverCity Tokyo Plaza in Odaiba to view the life-sized *Gundam*

exhibit. Seeing the 18-metre tall *Gundam RX78-2* was a dream come true for many *Gundam* fans but alas, it was removed on 5 March 2017. Thankfully, Bandai had great news for us and announced that a 24-metre tall *RX-0 Unicorn Gundam* will be the replacement! Another excuse to visit Japan again!

### Conclusion

Life as a doctor will never be easy. The constant need to improve our medical knowledge, the amount of time spent on preparing for various post-graduate examinations and the never-ending medical paper writings, will often take up a large portion of our free time. To my fellow colleagues, do take a break at times to do the things you enjoy and do not abandon your hobbies! Put in as much heart and soul to everything: hobbies, examinations, family. Let me end by quoting this phrase I learnt from the anime *Attack on Titans*: 心臓を捧げよ! (Japanese for "devote your heart") ♦

### Legend

1. One of my early car modifications – the SLK 200 18-inch AMG rim
2. Just a few of my *Gunpla* collection
3. The life-sized *Gundam RX78-2* at DiverCity Tokyo Plaza, Odaiba