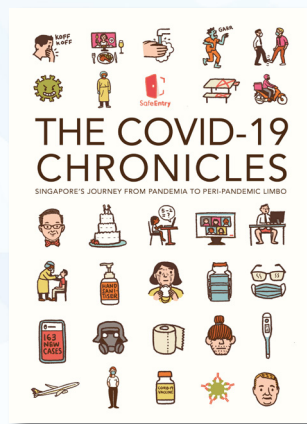


Chronicling SINGAPORE'S COVID-19 JOURNEY

Review by Dr Kenneth Goh and Dr Kenneth Lyen



Title: *The COVID-19 Chronicles: Singapore's Journey from Pandemia to Peri-Pandemic Limbo*

Author: Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore

Number of pages: 212 (paperback)

Illustrators: Andrew Tan and Anngee Neo

ISBN: 9789811251443 (paperback), 9789811251061 (ebook)

Type of book: Paperback and ebook

Publisher: World Scientific Publishing

Year of publication: 2021

The world has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Countless people have been infected, numerous hospitals overwhelmed, and millions have died. Amid all the confusion, another virus has been proliferating on the Internet – fake news.

Where can you find authoritative, highly readable, yet light-hearted and personal accounts of the COVID-19 pandemic? Right here in *The COVID-19 Chronicles: Singapore's Journey from Pandemia to Peri-Pandemic Limbo (Chronicles)*. This is a series of beautifully drawn cartoon strips in full colour. Every page addresses a particular topic or question, with the last panel featuring an expert giving comments and practical advice. The featured expert is Prof Dale Fisher, with other experts occasionally roped in, including the dean of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine Prof Chong Yap Seng and other specialists. This adds a wonderful touch to the cartoons, as they are the voices of real humans!

The book chronicles the events and experiences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, starting from early 2020 when it first entered Singapore. It embraces the ups and downs of this period, examining the personal hardships, distress and adaptations to this horrendous disease, all the way until August 2021. The information is broken down and simplified into small chunks of data that are easily swallowed and digested. The cartoon format is very enticing, especially when many readers these days prefer reading comics with their intense visuals compared to pages of pictureless and soporific words. The cartoon presentation also lightens the scenes and brings some humour to them.

Chronicles aims to educate the public about the virus, the symptoms associated with the condition, the physical complications and psychological effects, and how it has affected families and society. The book explains the way the virus is spread, how our immune system defends us, and practical measures that can be taken to reduce its transmission. It strongly recommends vaccination, the wearing of masks, safe-distancing measures, the washing of hands, minimising leaving home and intermingling in crowded places. In one scene, a worried pregnant mother receives understanding and comfort from her husband when she expresses her fears about infecting their baby: "So don't worry so much".

The book also aims to counteract all the misinformation that muddles social media and reinforces scaremongers and anti-vaxxers. "Misinformation can



Chronicles 33 Don't Spread False Information crop

cause unnecessary alarm. We should not speculate or spread unfounded rumours,” says Prof Fisher in one panel.

Most importantly, the book thanks healthcare workers and volunteers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help battle this invisible enemy. They have helped to hold mortality rates in Singapore at one of the lowest in the world. “Today we honour the efforts of all who have had to adapt to new ways of working to help keep everyone safe.” announces Prof Chong.

Finally, the book gives us hope for the future. We cannot be complacent, and we have to remain vigilant as the virus continues to mutate and spread more readily, affecting us in new and unexpected ways.

Chronicles is a most timely, thoroughly readable and comprehensively informative

cartoon book. We highly recommended it to everybody, from the young to the old.

To quote Prof Fisher: “Hang in there!” ♦

Further reading

1. NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. *The COVID-19 Chronicles*. Available at: <https://nus.edu/3jpKjRV>.

Caption writers:

Prof Chong Yap Seng is the dean of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine) and professor of O&G and was the initiator of the series of cartoons.

Prof Dale Fisher is a professor of infectious diseases at NUS Medicine. He is the chair of the Steering Committee of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO). He was one

of the representatives of the WHO who visited China to understand the origin of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Illustrators:

Andrew Tan, also known as Drewscape, is an Eisner-nominated comic artist who has published two graphic novels and teaches art at several tertiary institutions in Singapore.

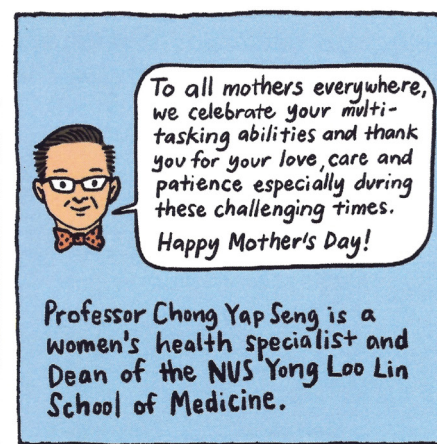
Angee Neo is a Singaporean illustrator who has illustrated four children's books.

Dr Goh spent too much time in school and ended up with too many degrees. His research focus is on viral immune responses and vaccine-induced immunity.



Chronicles 18 Mommies Don't Worry crop

Dr Lyen is a paediatrician and founder of the Rainbow Centre for autistic and intellectually challenged persons. He trained in infectious diseases at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, London.



Chronicles 46 Happy Mother's Day crop