

Citation

FOR PROF TAY BOON KENG

Text by Prof K Satku



I am privileged to have been asked by Prof Tay Boon Keng to read his citation at this august event. Many of us admire and are familiar with Prof Tay's achievements and contributions. However, there are some significant achievements and contributions of his that have largely remained silent, reflecting the unassuming nature of the man himself.

Let me in the next few minutes highlight some of these lesser-known achievements and contributions, among his others.

Scholar and educator

In his journey to becoming an eminent orthopaedic surgeon, Prof Tay has had an outstanding academic record. He was a gold medallist in a Royal Australasian College of Surgeons examination.

All of us are familiar with, and have benefitted from, the now well-established ATLS, or Advanced Trauma Life Support Course. Prof Tay was one of the individuals who, in the early 1990s, negotiated with the American College of Surgeons and introduced this course into Singapore.

For orthopaedic trainees, Prof Tay introduced the US Specialty Board's annual in-training examinations. This was in the late 1990s, well before residency was established in Singapore. It enabled our orthopaedic trainees and their supervisors to gauge the trainees' standing against the US residents at each year of their training. This assessment enabled us to optimise the training.

Boon Keng is a popular undergraduate and postgraduate teacher and examiner, and for many years was responsible for the orthopaedic training and teaching programmes at Singapore General Hospital (SGH). In recognition of these extensive contributions to medical education, he was conferred the Clinical Professorship by National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2005. And when the Duke-NUS Medical School was established, he was appointed Professor at the school too.

Clinical leadership

Boon Keng's clinical and leadership qualities were recognised early in his

career, and in 1996, he was appointed Head of the Department (HOD) of Orthopaedic Surgery at SGH. Three years later in 1999, while still holding the post of HOD, he became Chairman, Division of Surgery, an office that required him to grow and ensure the optimal delivery of the surgical services at SGH.

He continued his meteoric rise and was appointed Chairman of the Medical Board in 2002, overseeing all medical services at SGH. In 2008, for his many contributions to healthcare and to the hospital, SGH conferred on him the title of Emeritus Consultant.

Boon Keng has also collaborated with healthcare facilities in many countries including China, the Philippines and Myanmar, helping them develop. He was appointed Chairman and now is Emeritus Consultant of Singapore Health Services' International Healthcare Collaboration Office.

Professional leadership

Prof Tay has served in leadership positions in many professional

organisations, including the Academy of Medicine, Singapore and the Singapore Medical Council. But when so many of us were falling over each other to lead these organisations, he stepped aside and moved to neglected areas where there was a dire need for leadership. He chose to champion the Medical Alumni Association, an enterprise that was at risk of going under because of dwindling membership and loss of direction. For years, only doctors, dentists and pharmacists from NUS and its predecessors were its members.

Under Prof Tay's leadership and in the last decade, its membership was expanded and it now includes doctors from Duke-NUS Medical School, nurses from the Alice Lee School of Nursing, NUS, doctors from the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, NTU and allied health professionals from Singapore Institute of Technology. As President of the Medical Alumni Association, he persevered, expanded and preserved our heritage. Enabling informal interactions among these groups of healthcare professionals will augur well for healthcare in Singapore.

Prof Tay is among the pioneers of sports medicine in Singapore, contributing to sports medicine's growth to becoming a recognised subspecialty.

When the inaugural Youth Olympic games were held in Singapore in 2010, Prof Tay was the natural choice for the office of Chief Medical Officer. He oversaw the medical needs of some 3,000 athletes from over 200 countries and executed the assignment with excellence.

Boon Keng has also served in many other areas that have largely remained silent. For instance, he also served as Senior Director at the Ministry of Health, overseeing the Division of both Hospital Services and Primary Care Services.

Family man

Despite all his clinical and professional commitments, Prof Tay is very much a family man. He and his wife – cardiologist Dr Susan Quek – dote on their children. I am informed that he was present



at most parent-teacher sessions as his children pursued their education. They are all in the healthcare sector, and one in particular, Dr Darren Tay, followed in his footsteps and became an orthopaedic surgeon. And as many of you know, Darren is now the HOD of Orthopaedic Surgery at SGH, a post held by his father some 25 years ago.

So, on that note, our Guest of Honour, SMA President and Members of the SMA, ladies and gentlemen, I present to you

Prof Tay Boon Keng, a gentleman, an eminent surgeon, an exemplary leader and a family man, for the conferment of SMA's highest honour – the Honorary Membership of the Association. ♦

Legend

1. Prof K Satku delivering the citation at the SMA Annual Dinner
2. Prof Tay BK and his family
3. Prof Tay BK receiving his award from Ms Lai Wei Lin

