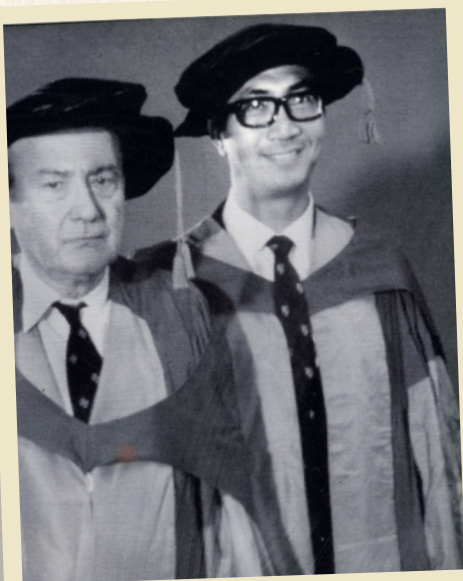


In Memoriam: Dr Chew Beng Kheng

(1933–2026)

Text by Dr Kanwaljit Soin



Dr Chew Beng Kheng (right) with the legendary Sir Gordon Arthur Ransome

It is with profound sadness that we mourn the passing of Dr Chew Beng Kheng (1933–2026), a distinguished physician, dedicated mentor and tireless philanthropist.

Born in Terengganu, Malaysia, Dr Chew was one of five children raised in a family that ran a textiles business. Dr Chew was the top student at his school in the 1950s. A scholarship paved the way for his medical studies.

Following his graduation from the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1958, he travelled to England, where he served as a senior house officer at the Royal Salop Infirmary in Shrewsbury. He then furthered his medical expertise by conducting research on liver diseases at the University of London and Yale University.

His career was marked by consistent clinical excellence. In 1961, he was awarded Master of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE). Upon returning to Singapore, he worked under Prof Yeoh Ghim Seng and Prof Gordon Arthur Ransome at Outram Hospital (now Singapore General Hospital [SGH]). During his tenure in public service, he also imparted his knowledge to the next generation as a lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Singapore. In 1970, he became a Fellow of the RCPE – distinguishing himself as one of the youngest to achieve this milestone in both Singapore and Malaysia.

To me, Dr Chew was far more than an esteemed senior colleague: he was a formative and fondly remembered teacher. I had the distinct privilege of being his student in the clinics of SGH in 1965. I was part of a tight-knit group of four female medical students – alongside my dear friends Margaret Teo, Tan Wee Khin and Grace Tan – who attended his clinical sessions. We were all struck by his approachable and friendly demeanour. I vividly remember how patiently he taught us to use our stethoscopes to discern heart sounds, making a complex lesson feel effortless. We were not only impressed by his exceptional teaching but also by his commanding presence – he was a tall, strikingly handsome man with a remarkably warm and engaging smile and a loud friendly laugh that put everyone at ease.

Beyond the hospital wards, our paths crossed again in the heart of the

community in the late 1980s. We served together on the Cairnhill Community Centre management committee during a period of active grassroots work. With Dr Wong Kwei Cheong serving as the grassroots adviser, Dr Chew led the committee with great dedication as its chairman and I had the privilege of serving as a volunteer under his leadership. This period reinforced what I had learned from him earlier: that the duty of a doctor extends far beyond treating illness to truly uplifting the society around us. His wider contributions to the workforce and society were later formally recognised when he received the Friend of Ministry of Community Development and Sports Award and the Service to Education Gold Award.

Our professional relationship continued to deepen as we navigated the private sector. Dr Chew opened his private practice, Chew Da Costa Pte Ltd, in 1977. As my own career moved into private practice, our dynamic evolved from teacher and student to collaborative colleagues. We frequently referred patients to one another; he entrusted me with his patients who suffered from upper limb and hand problems, while I sent him patients requiring complex internal medicine care. Through these exchanges, I continued to learn from his immense clinical wisdom in a deeply collegial manner.

Dr Chew was also a prominent leader in the wider medical community. He served as the Honorary Secretary of SMA from 1972 to 1974. In 1973, he



headed a 22-person SMA study tour to China. During this trip, the delegation toured hospitals, acupuncture clinics and medical centres, exchanging views with Chinese doctors and witnessing global medicine firsthand.

Dr Chew lived by an ethos of upliftment, cementing his legacy through immense generosity. Remembering his roots, he established the Chew Beng Kheng Bursary in 2011, open to both Singaporean and Malaysian medical students, with priority given to those from his home state of Terengganu. In 2012, he funded the Gordon Arthur Ransome Gold Medal and Prizes in Internal Medicine in memory of his former mentor.

Continuing this spirit of giving, his children established the Chew Beng

Kheng Scholarship in honour of his 80th birthday in 2013 to support financially needy undergraduates at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

Outside of medicine, his boundless energy found a home in the sporting world, where he contributed significantly as vice-president of the Singapore Badminton Association and honorary treasurer of the Asian Badminton Confederation.

Dr Chew Beng Kheng's legacy is one of clinical excellence, steadfast generosity and an unyielding dedication to human welfare. He will be deeply missed, but his spirit will live on in the countless patients he healed, the colleagues he inspired and the community he so faithfully served. ♦