

Wong Hock Boon Appreciation Dinner 2012

Dr Irwani Ibrahim sharing her thoughts on mentorship in research

By Lim Jia Wei

With bright gold and rose-coloured cloth draped across the ceiling, and black and gold balloons bundled in an arch over the entrance, the staff lounge at the NUHS Tower Block was transformed within hours into an informal yet classy setting for the inaugural annual Wong Hock Boon Appreciation Dinner. Held on 21 November 2012, this student-led initiative by the Wong Hock Boon (WHB) Society, an undergraduate student research society, brought together clinician scientists and students for an evening of food, fun and interaction, and at the same time honoured outstanding research mentors through a simple awards ceremony. Despite being a short one-hour programme, the dinner was organised to recognise the efforts put in by mentors in guiding our students and provide a platform for students and mentors to network on an informal setting, building closer mentor-mentee ties. For students new to research, this was also a chance to meet potential mentors and peers currently engaged in research to understand more about their experiences.

As students and doctors streamed into the lounge, it was quickly filled with pockets of people engaged in conversations about everything under the sun. It was a heartwarming sight for the organisers to see over 90 students and mentors gathered together as one research community while people connected with one another around the cocktail tables set up.

Prof Saw Seang Mei, Vice Dean for research at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSoM) delivered an introductory speech. Then both Dr Irwani Ibrahim, one of the WHB Society mentors, and Bryce Tan, a first year medical student at YLLSoM, stepped up to speak about their experience in research as a mentor and mentee respectively, and shared words of advice to other students present. Prof Tay Sook Muay, Associate Dean of Singapore General Hospital, then took the floor, speaking enthusiastically about the joys and importance of mentorship.

Indeed, the mentorship structure of the WHB Society offers student members a greatly sheltered yet stimulating environment to grow our skills and knowledge. We have much to be grateful for, not least of all the opportunity to even have this experience, courtesy of our mentors' willingness to spend valuable time and effort guiding us along.

As a simple measure of our appreciation, the WHB Society partnered SMA to introduce the WHB-SMA Outstanding Mentor Awards. This year, the WHB Advisory Panel shortlisted five exceptional mentors for the awards, based on the students' detailed recounts in the nominations received. We had the honour of inviting A/Prof Chin Jing Jih, President of SMA, to present the awards to these five inspirational mentors: A/Prof Paul Ananth Tambyah (National University of Singapore [NUS]), A/Prof Shirley Ooi (National University Hospital [NUH]), Dr Derrick Aw (NUH), Dr Irwani Ibrahim (NUH), and A/Prof Soong Tuck Wah (NUS). The audience was then treated to an interesting project presentation by WHB Society member and fifth year YLLSoM student, Lim Tian Zhi, before the dinner concluded with food and a lucky draw.

Although the dinner comprised only a short and simple programme, it was nevertheless the start of a yearly tradition to show gratitude to the research mentors and bring the numerous doctors, researchers and students together in a light-hearted and meaningful event. After all, inspiration comes from many sources, and who is to say the contacts made over this dinner will not be one of them?

We trust that all doctors and students who came down to be with us for the dinner enjoyed themselves. And for all those who missed out, well, here's an invitation for the WHB Appreciation Dinner 2013! ☺ **SMA**

The WHB Society organises many activities for students to get involved in research and accumulate exposure and research skills through a series of talks, workshops and interactive events. We are always looking out for ways to further enrich our students, and partners we can work with for this cause. To find out more about us, please visit our website at <http://www.nuhs.edu.sg/research/wong-hock-boon-society.html> or email our student committee at whbsociety@gmail.com.



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