

# IN MEMORY OF PROF FENG PAO HSII: RHEUMATOLOGIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

**Text by Prof Fong Kok Yong, Senior Consultant Rheumatologist, Department of Rheumatology and Immunology and Chairman, Medical Board, Singapore General Hospital**

On the morning of 19 December came the sad and sudden news that Prof Feng Pao Hsii, illustrious rheumatologist (and nephrologist and infectious disease pioneer) had passed on peacefully in his sleep. He left behind a legacy of having nurtured and mentored generations of rheumatologists from Singapore and beyond. Respect for Prof Feng is so high that in July 2000, the Singapore Society of Rheumatology inaugurated the first Feng Pao Hsii Lecture in his honour. How do we even start to describe such a man?

In 1969, he went to Israel for further training under the auspices of the World Health Organization Research Fellowship and is still well remembered by friends there. Prof Yehuda Shoenfeld wrote, "I am so sorry to hear about the demise of Prof Feng, a great and long-time friend who not only did so much together with us but was a real friend of Israel, having been trained in our country. The world without Prof Feng will be different. I will cherish him in my heart."

Indeed the rheumatology world will be different without Prof Feng. He was a man of few words, but when he spoke, we listened. When he had a vision, he brought it to fruition. That was how rheumatology started as a new discipline in 1986 — advancing from aches and pains to one dealing with the diverse nature of autoimmunity like lupus. In the same year, the National University of Singapore awarded Prof Feng with an MD for his work, *Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) in Singapore — A Clinical Study*.



Prof Feng is indeed the Father of Rheumatology and SLE in Singapore.

While he was a high achiever, he also paid attention to individuals under his charge. Dr Chew Li Ching vividly remembers, "Prof was also a gentleman with a caring heart. I recall when I first set foot in Singapore, he frequently enquired if I had settled in and was happy in my work during the early days. And in the latter years, when the kids came along, he would often ask how they were doing and even remembered their names. He was a great man who had a big heart."

In the last two years, frail health hindered his mobility, but his mind was just as sharp and seeking. I recall

my last conversation with him on 28 November 2015; we talked about family, kids, our Singapore society and politics, overseas friends, his health and yes, the training of younger rheumatologists. On 24 December, the sky opened and poured for more than half an hour before the sea burial could proceed. Prof Feng will be remembered as a visionary, an academic, a mentor, a caring boss, a family man and a great friend to all. ♦

Prof Feng Pao Hsii was an SMA Honorary Member and served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Singapore Medical Journal* from 1978 to 1987.