

THE POWERFUL T+ONIC



PROFILE



TEXT BY

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Dr Ngoh Lee Ying Clara is a first year senior resident in nephrology at the National University Healthcare System (NUHS). She was a recipient of the 2015-2016 NUHS clinician scientist programme-residency (NCSP-R) grant.

The disclaimer to my article is that I cannot assert a claim to excel in academia and have yet to publish much in any area. I became interested in research simply because I like finding answers to clinical problems. Personally, churning out statistical data gives me an emotional "high".

However, I think I represent fairly accurately the vast majority of my peers in junior and senior residency when I say that the current hospital environment still does not encourage active research for young clinicians like me. Most of my research work was done on time carved out from personal and family time. It helped that I had some background in statistical analysis from my undergraduate schooling days in Edinburgh; but for a young clinician without the knowledge, it would have been far more challenging for them to get started in research. Perhaps we need to re-examine our priorities in educating doctors of tomorrow. Clearly, we cannot always have our pie and eat it. Not everyone wants to include research in their long-term career, but I

believe that every young doctor should be exposed to clinical or laboratory studies because it adds depth to our clinical maturity. It did so for me.

The more obvious advantage of research is that it helps with career progression in an increasingly competitive healthcare landscape. To this end, I was equally impressed and bemused to see second year medical students getting involved in projects! But the true spirit of research for us, as physicians, should be the hunger for answers and the keenness to push the frontiers of the unknown in medicine, for the benefit of patients.

As Dr Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1937 once said: "Research is to see what everybody else has seen and to think what nobody else has thought." ◆

"THERE IS NO MEDICINE LIKE HOPE, AND NO TONIC SO POWERFUL AS EXPECTATIONS OF SOMETHING BETTER THAN TODAY, FOR TOMORROW." – DR ORISON SWETT MARDEN