



Mentorship and apprenticeship are part and parcel of our profession. The very mechanism of "See one, Do one, Teach one" breaks down without people willing to teach and without an environment that supports teachers.

As an example, let's remember a monumental event that occurred at the time of writing.<sup>1</sup> I refer, of course, to Joseph Schooling winning Singapore's first Olympic gold medal thereby defeating Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian of all time. A friend of mine, Dr Ong Eng Keow, posted this on his Facebook page: "Such Giants in sport like Michael Phelps who inspire a new generation reminds me of how we mentor medical students and inspire them to greater heights and possibilities." In fact, Phelps himself said after his defeat: "I wanted to change the sport of swimming... now I think you are seeing it."

Our profession has been blessed. There has been no shortage of well-respected mentors with excellent clinical acumen and dedication to teaching their craft. With three medical schools, a changing healthcare and training landscape, and dwindling numbers of the "old guard", there is a continual and almost urgent need for new teachers.

While compiling this issue, I read the text of a speech delivered by Dr Wong Heck Sing for the SMA Lecture in 1997.<sup>2</sup> He spoke about role models in medicine, listed characteristics of ideal role models and stressed the ongoing need to

retain good clinical teachers despite changes in our healthcare system. I was struck by what he said: "The time may come when a whole new generation of teachers, brought up in an environment where doctoring is no longer a calling but a service industry, leave behind them a legacy that commands little respect... steps must be taken to prevent this from happening... to retain good doctors... good proven teachers in the service... Time is not on our side."

Dr Wong's speech touched on a myriad of issues, some of which were hot-button topics then, but remain equally relevant today. While this editorial is not the platform to go into all those issues, I certainly hope it spurs healthy discussion and positive outcomes. There are individuals out there who want to serve as teachers and mentors of our future generation of doctors, specialists and family practitioners. The "system", including our institutions, has been active in supporting that and needs to continue to do so. The government's decision to defer Schooling's national service enabled him to train for the 2016 Olympics but it can be argued that more can be done. Can we do the same? Can our healthcare system achieve the same result and more?

This issue is dedicated to our teachers and mentors; we feature interviews and articles about how they have inspired us. They are a part of our history and legacy and they have moulded many generations of doctors, some of whom are now Giants themselves.



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Speaking of Giants, I was reminded by A/Prof Goh Lee Gan that our clinical teachers are not the only mentors we look up to. Certainly, there are our leaders in society, at work and in politics. But there are also our colleagues. A/Prof Goh offered me a timely reminder that these "unnamed same-level mentors" are the ones who "help us mind the p's and q's of life, who give a helping hand, a push, and an encouraging word".

As a nation, I think we all hope that Schooling's achievement will inspire a new generation of local sportsmen. This will be his legacy. May this issue inspire a yearning in each of us to provide mentorship and to teach the next generation. We may not all be Giants, but we have a lot to learn from each other. Let's share that wealth of knowledge for the benefit of our patients, and the colleagues who will some day care for us.

What will our legacy be? ♦

### Notes

1. It was almost impossible to write this editorial without bringing up Joseph Schooling. The article deadline was a mere four days after his historic win and an initial draft had been finished the night before his race. However, in view of that landmark achievement, a rewrite was called for, the initial draft deleted with great reluctance and a new editorial duly completed.
2. For those interested to read the full speech, this link <http://goo.gl/2ewCrc> also allows you to view responses to Dr Wong's lecture. These include a sharp and honest entry by none other than the SMA Hobbit, as well as then-year four medical student, Dr Tor Phern Chern, who is now a consultant at the Institute of Mental Health, and whom I consider a fine teacher as well.