

Dr Choo Jim Eng

(20 May 1923 – 20 March 2003)

By Chew Chin Hin, Tan Ser Kiat & Low Cheng Hock

Mr Choo Jim Eng, or Jimmy, as he was fondly known by his friends, colleagues and students, had a very illustrious career. He dedicated his whole life to the service of medicine in general, and surgery in particular.

Jimmy was born in 1923, and completed his Senior Cambridge School Certificate with distinctions, at the tender age of 14 at the Raffles Institution. Too young to enroll in the University, he had to wait until he was 17 before being admitted to the King Edward VII College of Medicine. However, with the Japanese Occupation, he could only complete medical studies after the war, as he was among the first batch of MBBS from the then University of Malaya.

He then went on to a very distinguished career in the public service. In 1957, he obtained his fellowship of the Edinburgh Royal College of Surgeons (RCS), and he was trained under illustrious names, such as Prof D E C Mekie and Prof Yeoh Ghim Seng. After working at the Singapore General Hospital, he became

the foundation head of the Department of Surgery at the Toa Payoh Hospital (the forefather of the current Changi General Hospital) in 1961, till 1973. He was also the Medical Director for several years. He was then seconded to the Singapore Armed Forces to start the medical service in the Medical Corps.

He returned to the Singapore General Hospital in 1973, to head the Department of Surgery, a post he held till 1985, when he retired. He continued as Senior Surgeon, and subsequently posted to Ministry of Health (MOH) to serve as medical advisor and auditor to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board.

Throughout his career, he held numerous outstanding portfolios.

He was a loyal academician, having served the Academy of Medicine for some 20 years at various positions including Chairman, Chapter of Surgeons, Scribe, Bursar and Council Member. He fully deserved the Academy Gold Medal that was awarded to him for his sterling services.

He was deeply involved in the joint M.Med/ FRCS (Edinburgh) Examination

from its very beginning, and was Chief Examiner from 1977 – 1986, and he was the Postgraduate School's Chairman of Surgery 1983 – 1986. He was also a true friend of the RCS Edinburgh.

Jimmy was also a colleague who served all doctors. He was a longstanding member of the Singapore Medical Association Council, and the President of SMA from 1974-75, 1977-1979. In 1980, he was President of the Singapore Medical Alumni Association.

His contribution to the medical community was tremendous. He trained several generations of surgeons, many of whom have become professors, heads of departments, and prominent figures themselves. Jimmy is well known for his humility, friendliness, and was always approachable.

For all his dedication and contributions, he received many honours. The most outstanding was the Public Administration Gold Medal from the Government of Singapore.

His passing on 20 March 2003 is a great loss to our community, and we will all miss him dearly. ■