

# Dr Ong Hok Su (27 July 1976 – 7 April 2003)

## A Life Less Ordinary

*By Dr Oh Jen Jen, Editorial Board Member*

**D**r Ong Hok Su was the youngest son of Datuk Dr Ong Thiam Teng and the late Datin Dr Tay Soat Hoon. He was born into a distinguished family comprising a large number of doctors. Therefore, it was no surprise that Hok Su later chose to join the medical profession. However, it was his true calling, rather than a sense of familial duty.

After spending his childhood days in Batu Pahat, Malaysia, he went on to study at the Anglo-Chinese Secondary School, and was the top boy from ACS to go to its affiliated junior college, working steadily towards his dream – to study medicine in London.

Subsequently, he studied at the University of Sydney for a short period, before being accepted at London's St Bartholomew's Hospital medical school. His good nature and exemplary character made him a popular student, and it was at the former institution that he met and fell in love with the lady to whom he would later propose marriage.

After completing his housemanship in London, Hok Su returned to Singapore to be with his family and fiancée. He was posted to the National University Hospital before moving on to Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Cardiology Department.

A gentle and unassuming person, he touched the hearts of many at his workplace. He was a conscientious and responsible worker, always willing to share the heavy workload, and never took any credit for his efforts. Often, his fellow medical officers found out about his good deeds only after discovering his signature in the patients' case-notes.

He treated everyone equally, whether it was a consultant or a health attendant, and his colleagues describe him as "helpful", "optimistic", or more simply, "a good guy".

The picture I have from Hok Su's family and friends is that of a young man who had an extremely good heart, who was greatly loved by all who knew him, and who definitely would have done well and made a significant contribution no matter which specialty he chose. He had a bright future – a successful career and a wedding in September – but succumbed to an illness that has also extinguished another dedicated doctor's life.

Although Hok Su is now known to most people as the first healthcare worker to succumb to SARS in Singapore, his family and friends have kindly broken their silence to assist in the writing of this eulogy. Their pain is shared by many, and we offer our deepest condolences to them for the loss of a filial son, a caring brother, a loving fiancé, and a loyal friend.

Hok Su's fiancée, Tania Oh, related how, as Christians, they believe that he has gone to a better place. I have no doubt that they're right, but he will always be remembered by us, and as one of his fellow MOs poignantly writes, "His smile will stay with us forever."

The medical community of Singapore mourns the passing of Dr Ong Hok Su.

**Dr Ong's family and fiancée wish to convey their appreciation to the staff, especially to the nurses in MICU, who took care of him during his stay at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. ■**