

Dr Adrian Wang is a Consultant Psychiatrist at Gleneagles Medical Centre. Before commencing private practice in October 2005, he was Chief of the Department of General Psychiatry and Consultant-in-charge of the Anxiety and Mood Clinic at the Institute of Mental Health. He was the Chief CARE Officer of the National CARE Management System from 2001 to 2005, and was involved in planning the psychological responses for the Asian Tsunami Crisis in 2004, and the Silkair MI185 and SIA 006 air crashes.

His main areas of specialty are the treatment and research of Mood and Anxiety Disorders, such as Depression and Bipolar Disorders, Panic Disorder, Grief and Adjustment Disorders, Trauma Psychiatry and Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy. He has conducted training workshops for healthcare professionals and the public on topics including depression, anxiety, phobias and grief counselling.

Dr Ernest Wang is a Consultant Neurosurgeon at the National Neuroscience Institute. As head of the clinical trials section of the Acute Brain Injury Laboratory (ABIRL) in the Department of Neurosurgery, he co-ordinates both industry sponsored and investigator initiated trials. As founding President of the Singapore Brain and Spine Injury Foundation (SBSIF), his dream is to improve the lives of both brain and spine injured patients and their family members alike by giving them the necessary support and hope for a better tomorrow.

Brothers in Medicine



Birthdays of Yesteryear - Dr Ernest Wang (left) celebrating his second birthday with his brother, Dr Adrian Wang (right).

Adrian



Toys of Yesteryear - Dr Adrian Wang (left) and Dr Ernest Wang (right).

When I was a child, I wanted to be a ...

Doctor. Probably my dad's influence – he was working at Alexandra Hospital as an anaesthetist then, and he was always telling us about his patients, colleagues and interesting things that happened at work. My earliest memories are of the old Alexandra Hospital building – the old corridors and staircases, the antiseptic smell, the old carpark and trees; and the old Medical Alumni building where my brother and I had swimming lessons on Sunday morning with a bunch of other doctors' kids.

The most influential person(s) in early life are ...

My parents. My father taught me the importance of hard work, discipline and good work ethic; while my mum showed me that you can always get a better deal if you know how to bargain well!

Was it a coincidence that both brothers studied medicine?

I guess we were both influenced by my dad in some way. I think it was coincidence that we each specialise in different aspects of the brain, though.

Why did you decide to become a psychiatrist?

It is an interesting job! Psychiatry helps me see life from different angles. I have seen patients from all walks of life, with all sorts of problems. I have heard the most heartbreaking stories – for example, a father's grief from the loss of his young son – to the funniest, strangest things. I think that psychological pain in some ways can be worse than physical pain. The stigma and burden of having a psychological problem can be overwhelming. But all in all – psychiatry helps me balance my life. It puts things in perspective for me – to see the funny, sad or touching side of many aspects of life.

My best medical school memory is ...

Passing the final MBBS. Or any test or exam, for that matter. They used to post the results on the notice board outside the Dean's Office. The tension as you walked towards the board, seeing your friend's faces – either elation from passing or despair from failing, scanning the list, and the relief that followed if you passed, or that "oh crap" feeling if you failed. So passing the final MBBS – after months of hard work – was the big one for me.

The most memorable thing I can remember as a practising doctor is ...

My housemanship year. A houseman has so many duties – clerking patients, tracing results, summarising casenotes, appeasing nursing officers and buying supper for the on-call team. I used to come back from Tiong Bahru market with packets of rice, noodles and drinks dangling from each finger when I was on call at the Singapore General Hospital. You always knew who the cheapskate or generous Registrars were, depending on how much they were willing to pay for supper.



Dr Adrian Wang de-stresses himself while on vacation in Tasmania.

The best thing a patient ever said to me ...

Was from a Bangladeshi worker who came to see me as a private patient recently. He had come for a third opinion, after not getting better for a long time. I spent a little more time than usual explaining the treatment options, the side-effects of his medications, and simplifying his dosages – common sense stuff. At the end of the consult, he said he understood his problem better and expressed his gratitude. He said I was the only doctor who had

spent such a long time talking to him. Perhaps the previous two doctors were encumbered by heavy patient loads and could not afford the time, but it reminded me that sometimes a simple thing like spending a few more minutes can really make a difference to the patient.

The worst thing a colleague ever said to me ...

Was during my housemanship year when I was yelled at by a senior doctor in front of a patient's family. I had made a simple and unintentional mistake when I was on call one evening, and this doctor shouted at me at the top of his voice. Looking back, perhaps I could have stood my ground and retorted, but as a houseman I had much more to lose. Basically, what this guy did to me was to bully me. Yes – I made a mistake, and if you wanted to teach or reprimand me, do it in the confines of your office. Not that I bear any grudges, but now, more than a decade later, we are all senior doctors on equal footing, and he is not so tough anymore. It works both ways – if you show your bad side to your juniors, it will come back to you someday. Conversely, if you are kind and helpful, people will remember too.

I spend my Sunday mornings ...

On my bike. Usually my road bike, sometimes my mountain bike. A group of us middle-aged thirty and forty somethings meet at the crack of dawn and ride for two to three hours through Upper Thomson, Mandai, Kranji and Lim Chu Kang. We are decked out in our tight jerseys and shorts, on carbon fibre bikes, pretending we are doing the Tour de France. It is a mid-life crisis thing. We want to feel young again. And we do – sometimes – when we whizz by a group of kids half our age!

A bad habit I would like to kick is ...

I have no bad habits. Ha ha. I wish.

My greatest extravagance is ...

My bike. I am always looking for ways to upgrade it, to make it faster, sleeker and lighter. Boys must have their toys, you see.

The book I am currently reading is ...

Manchester United ruined my life by Colin Shindler, a Manchester City supporter. It is the ultimate underdog's book.

My favourite book/author is ...

Anything written by Isaac Asimov. He has a way of

turning logic and science on its head, so you see things you normally would not.

The music playing in my car stereo is ...

"*Every man for himself*" by Hoobastank. They are a rock band from Los Angeles.

My favourite bands are ...

Pink Floyd and the Rolling Stones. And my favourite Pink Floyd album is "*Wish you were here*". One of the songs on the album, "*Shine on you crazy diamond*" was written as a tribute to their chief songwriter, Syd Barrett, who suffered from a mental illness. He died in July this year.



Dr Adrian Wang at the 2005 Osim Triathlon.

The last movie I watched was ...

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest.

I think everyone should watch ...

The Lord of the Rings trilogy. Fantasy, action, adventure, romance, suspense – it has them all. Lose yourself in it for nine hours.

My biggest food weakness is ...

Thai food. Spicy is good. Even though you pay for it the next day!

I would like to be remembered as ...

Someone who really tried his best in everything. We all want to be good doctors, good parents, good spouses, to make a difference in the lives of the people we meet. But in reality we may fall short – but if you have tried your best, I think no one can ask for anything more. ■

When I was a child, I wanted to be a ...

Superhero! Honestly, I had little ambition as a kid. Like most others, I just wanted to have fun, fun and more fun. Pretty similar to my children's sole aim in life. I did, however, become slightly more ambitious in later life!

My best medical school memory is ...

Joining the varsity tennis team where I met my wife. I will always remember how I first asked her out on our first date, where we went, what we did. (*ahem*)

The most influential person in early life is ...

My father and not forgetting my mother of course. Most of my good traits must be credited to them for being great parents and good role-models. My bad traits have definitely come from mixing with the wrong company, nothing to do with the genes.



Dr Ernest Wang's time with his family.

The most memorable thing I can remember as a practising doctor is ...

Having to assist Professor Ong Peck Leong on Monday mornings. The feeling I had on a Sunday night was worse than the BMT army "book-in" feeling; most importantly, the training I had under such a great surgeon was priceless.

The best and worst thing a colleague ever said to me was ...

"No room for error, your complication rate must be zero". Actually, he is not quite my colleague but rather my present head of department. Exacting standards that are quite impossible to completely abide by, but it certainly keeps us all on our toes.

I spend my Sunday mornings doing ...

A ward round, followed by attending church and then a family lunch. We invariably end up in Great World City. They did not call it "Great World" for nothing. You can have McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, *sushi*, Gourmet Japanese food, *dim sum*, *la mian*, fun at Time Zone, catch a movie, work out in the gym – endless.

A bad habit I would like to kick is ...

What bad habit? I have none. Neurosurgeons have no bad habits.

My greatest extravagance is ...

Getting the accessories for my Subaru WRX. Fujitbuso Legalis-R exhaust (mind you, LTA-approved), OZ-racing Prodrive gold rims, 225/45/17 Goodyear Eagle F1 tyres and not forgetting the "furry dice" I hang up on the rear-view mirror.

The book I am currently reading is ...

The Accidental by Ali Smith. Try reading it, I am.

My favourite book is ...

Man and Boy by Tony Parsons. This first novel by British journalist and TV personality is a touching and witty read. Harry Silver, his alter ego learns to be a father to his four-year old son, and a son to his aging father.

The music playing in my car stereo is ...

"*Let It Will Be*" by Madonna. What else do you expect in a WRX. Well, there is also "*Wise Men*" by James Blunt. If you do not know what "pernickety" means, go listen to that brilliant song.

My favourite singer is ...

Duran Duran; rather my favourite group. Which other band had a lead singer who could not really sing, and yet successfully led the British 1980's invasion of the American Billboard 100s.

The last movie I watched was ...

Gone with the Wind. Always wondered what the big deal was until I saw this wonderful movie at Cathay's official opening.

I think everyone should watch ...

All the movies they can before they have kids.

My biggest food weakness is ...

Typical Chinese preserved fruits – *kiam sng di*.

I would like to be remembered as ...

A good person. ■