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NHG College:

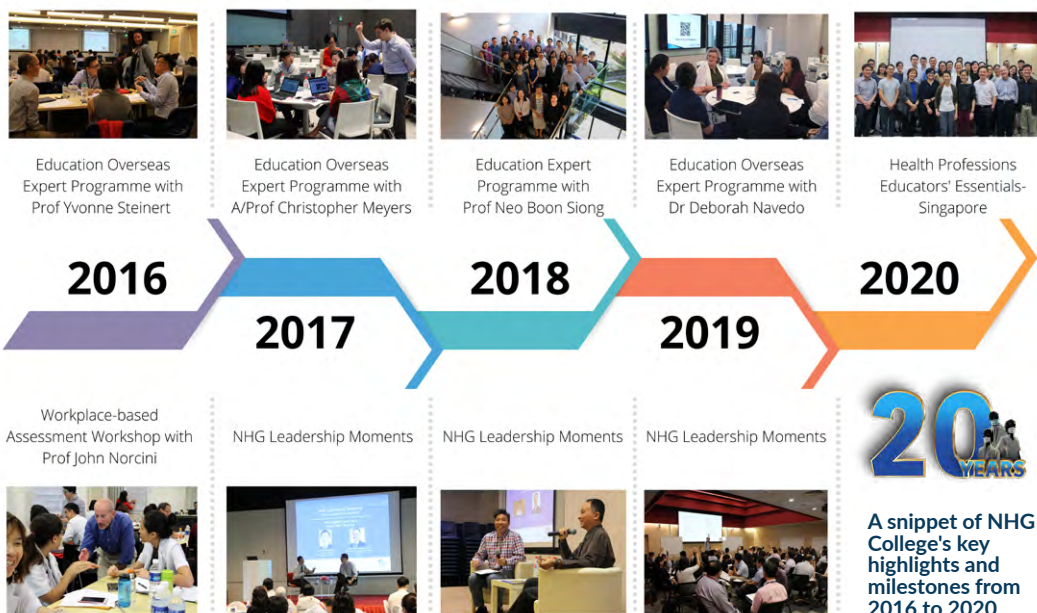
Celebrating 20 Years of Developing NHG's Workforce

By Grant Ng

Some 50 faculty from National Healthcare Group (NHG), partners and senior management members gathered together on 2 December 2022 to network and share light moments together as they commemorate NHG College's 20th Anniversary in facilitating the continuous learning and development of NHG's workforce.

In his opening address, Professor Chee Yam Cheng, President, NHG College took some time to reflect on the College's 20-year journey. "When NHG College was first founded, the healthcare and healthcare education landscape were very different... we (Singapore) had two public healthcare clusters, one medical school, and one nursing school," he said, adding that the pioneer team of five focused on centralising and organising major training initiatives (e.g. health professions education, professional development, etc.) for NHG.

"Over the years, College has continued to play an important role by contributing to the creation of a learning ecosystem for leadership development, health professions education, faculty development... and continuing professional development," said Prof Chee.



Since its inception, NHG College has developed and introduced various faculty and leadership development programmes such as the Education Overseas Expert Programme (EOEP), which provides NHG clinical educators and faculty with the opportunity to learn from the expertise and experience of renowned education experts on education-related topics; and NHG Leadership Moments, which provides colleagues and senior management members in NHG with a platform to network and learn from each other and distinguished speakers.

Like the rest of the world, NHG College's modus operandi was put to the test by the COVID-19 pandemic, as face-to-face workshops and training were brought to a standstill. NHG College seized the opportunity and jumped on the digital bandwagon, digitalising more than 80 per cent of its programmes by the end of 2020. And at the end of FY 2021, it delivered some 88 training programmes online that benefitted more than 3,000 colleagues and healthcare professionals in NHG.

"Through this journey, College has remained steadfast in its commitment to provide the best learning experience for learners and to nurture leaders, educators and professionals, grounded in NHG's values," said Prof Chee.

"Thanks to your hard work and sacrifice, we were able to keep teaching and learning going, bringing learning online and virtually when there were restrictions in coming together, in spite of your heavy clinical load."

"I really want to thank all our educators here from various professional groups for all your contribution to College and faculty development programmes," said Ms Yvonne Ng, Executive Director, NHG College, as she shared her journey with NHG College.

"The thing that heartens me most is how many of you are so willingly stepping up to be facilitators and (make) that difference. Thanks a lot for that."

Mr Lim Wei Beng, Deputy Director, NHG College who kickstarted the celebration, gave a light-hearted address to thank the faculty for their contributions towards NHG College over the past 20 years. He gave a special spotlight to those who had watched College grow from its infancy.

"I think we have come a long way. Thanks for journeying with us and partnering with us," Mr Lim said.

Echoing the same sentiment, Associate Professor Michelle Jong, Group Chief Education Officer, NHG, who was also present at the celebration said: "I want to take this opportunity to thank everybody here who are great friends, colleagues and great supporters of College. All the great people whose shoulders we stand on now, and all the new people who are coming ahead of us to build this great team."



Clockwise from top left: Ms Yvonne Ng, Prof Chee Yam Cheng, A/Prof Michelle Jong and Mr Lim Wei Beng, taking turns to express their gratitude to NHG College's educators and partners.

[Click here to learn more about the programmes organised by NHG College!](#)





Striving for a Healthier Singapore: The Role of the Clinician and Organisation **By Grant Ng**

Professor Neo Boon Siong, former Canon Chair Professor of Business from the Nanyang School of Business, Nanyang Technological University graced the National Healthcare Group (NHG) College's 20th Anniversary luncheon to share his insights on Singapore's healthcare workforce development.

Prof Neo who is no stranger to NHG – having been invited to speak at the 2018 NHG Education Expert Programme – and Singapore's healthcare landscape, highlighted three points during his sharing. One, healthcare professionals (HCPs) should seek to learn throughout their professional careers. Two, practical intelligence is a vital skill that HCPs should develop. And three, greater inter-organisational collaboration is needed to achieve population health.

Prof Neo also touched on the importance of learning in the context of healthcare. "Learning is at the core and centre of the future of healthcare," he said. "We're doing a lot of things that are new and different that cannot be done without each one of us individually (and) professionally continuing to learn". He believed that HCPs perform best not when they repeatedly do the same task for a long time, but when they learn while they work.

Prof Neo highlighted that there exists an "artificial separation" between 'learning' and 'doing'. "As professionals, we learn as we work, they're not separate... The quality of our professional work depends on us learning while we're doing," he said, calling on HCPs to strive to better integrate learning into their daily operations.

As an extension to his belief of continual learning through one's profession, Prof Neo feels that HCPs should possess a good understanding of the larger context that they operate in.

He shared the example of a clinician treating a patient. When caring for a patient, the HCP has to look at multiple aspects of the patient's health beyond the physical body. These include the social and psychological aspects that affect a person's well-being. Thus, Prof Neo believed that HCPs should develop the capability to look beyond 'how' to treat patients, and also consider when the treatment(s) should be rendered, its intensity, and duration.

Prof Neo Boon Siong shared his observations of Singapore's healthcare system and how NHG can adapt moving forward, to achieve its goal of a healthy Singapore.

He underscored that the current training and development of NHG professionals have been successful in ensuring high-quality patient care. And this gives NHG a good base to springboard onto the next level of impact – developing practical intelligence in HCPs.

"(In) the next ten years of College, we would have to begin to consider and look into how we develop that practical intelligence. To know how to use our professional skills in a larger context of how we work, and therefore how to moderate the way we apply those skills in a meaningful and intelligent manner," he said.

In his final point, Prof Neo articulated that for NHG to achieve a healthier Singapore, there would need to be greater collaborations with community groups and stakeholders outside the healthcare system. "In the coming years, NHG has to look beyond interprofessional collaboration, to an inter-organisational one to achieve its population health outcomes," he said.

Prof Neo is optimistic that greater inter-organisational collaboration can be achieved by involving community partners in the entire care ecosystem. He encouraged HCPs to work with these partners to look at challenges and explore ideas of what can be done in patient care, whilst also encouraging the participants to reflect on how they as individual professionals, healthcare leaders and institutional leaders, can be "more effective in achieving the future of healthcare".



Unwire, Rewire and Let Go



Feeling mentally or emotionally exhausted, frustrated with the people working around you, and always questioning if you are able to continue with what you are doing?

Then it is possible that you may be experiencing burnout.

"Feeling burnout is not fake, it's real," said Dr Wee Teck Young (also known as Dr Hakim Young), a Singaporean physician and humanitarian based in Afghanistan, to the 180 National Healthcare Group (NHG) residents, physicians and nurses during the November 2022 edition of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) Conference, organised by the NHG Resident Council.

Importance of addressing burnout at the Workplace

Burnout can be described as chronic stress in our brain and body, shared Dr Young.

Referencing the Maslach Burnout Inventory, he explained that burnout at the workplace can be described as a mismatch of community, workload, reward, fairness and values at the workplace.

"(Such as) long hours and high workload with not enough manpower; demanding patients; colleagues who cover their own backs; impersonal and competitive career paths with no team support; a 'kiasu' (Hokkien for "fear of losing out") or 'wayang' (Malay for "putting on a show") striving-to-be-number-one work culture," said Dr Young, cautioning that should anyone feel caught in such an environment and is unable to manage burnout, his/her "wellbeing may disappear" and he/she will continue to experience chronic stress.

"It is like the hard wiring or short circuits in us, which fire off constantly, day and night... (where) you are in constant fight-or-flight mode," he added.

"Your wise emotions are sending you a genuine red alert. Please listen to your body and brain. Be kind (to yourself). And understand why it's so important to press 'pause'."

Intentional Unwiring and Rewiring

Having lived in war-ridden Afghanistan for the last 16 years, Dr Young reiterated the importance of emotional self-care.

"The injustice and the worst of human behaviour that I witnessed in the war system made me both anxious and angry," he shared. "And it would make me occasionally explode like a volcano."

"I eventually found myself dealing with exhaustion and chronic stress... and it unknowingly caused me to grind my teeth tight... leading to dental fractures."

Dr Young realised that he had to unwire himself from the stressors, and set aside time to care for his emotional health in order for his mind and body to recover.

He started looking inwards, identifying his stressors or "triggers" that drove his stress, and most importantly, acknowledging that there are things that are beyond his ability to change. "I stopped blaming myself or anyone else in the (war) system... I couldn't change the system, but I could unwire from its triggers," said Dr Young. "This meant relaxing and letting go of the 'chronic circuits' that the war stressors had hardwired into me."

"There are literally endless ways to rewire and restore actual balance of a healthy life. You'll figure it out. It's largely common sense... reframe your life as you support one another."

- Dr Hakim Young

Reframing to Let Go

'Letting go' is not being detached to the situation or emotion, stressed Dr Young. "It is being courageous and stepping up to what we are facing and saying, I don't need to let this situation trigger me anymore. It will pass," he said.

"I realised that over the years, as an individual, I cannot change either the system of another person... (but) what I can do is to work within myself, and that helped me to let go."

Dr Young acknowledged that letting go might not be that simple when one encounters complex situation(s) or frustrations – especially in a clinical or hospital setting.

"Our minds make things more complicated and complex than life is in its natural flow," he said, urging the participants to reach out to someone or seek psychosocial support, whenever one feels stressed or overwhelmed.

"There are literally endless ways to rewire and restore actual balance of a healthy life," said Dr Young. "You'll figure it out. It's largely common sense... reframe your life as you support one another."

Reframing helps us to see and respond to the situation(s) that we encounter, he said. "It helped me to see my situation... from larger and different perspectives... instead of (falling back to) my same old anxiety and anger."

Dr Young recalled his visit to the Afghanistan mountains, and how its beauty made him realise that his "frustrations appear too trivial to fret over". He explained that by reframing his anger, work and life in the context of the vast wonders of nature, "the things and people I got angry with, lost its toxicity in this quiet endless universe".

"We are social creatures, not solo robots, so reach out to at least one person. Psychosocial support is so crucial for our mental health, and I invite you to think about it now."



Dr Hakim Young (M.B.B.S, MMed Family Medicine) is a medical doctor from Singapore who has done public health, humanitarian and peace-building work in Afghanistan for 20 years. His journey and work with an Afghan peace group has helped him see the pressing importance of caring for our emotional health every day as an imperative to stay resilient and human. He seeks wider conversations on personal and public ways, including in emotional healthcare, to nurture the inter-connected well-being of our humanity and planet. Dr Young is the 2012 recipient of the International Pfeffer Peace Prize and the 2017 recipient of the Singapore Medical Association Merit Award for contributions in social service to communities.



NHG Orthopaedic Surgery Residency Programme Won Top Fundraiser Award for raising over \$21,000



The National Healthcare Group (NHG) Orthopaedic Surgery residency programme was presented with Make-A-Wish Singapore's Top Fundraiser Award, for raising more than \$21,700 in the '2022 Santa Race for Wishes' at its annual community engagement day. The funds raised will go towards granting wishes of children with critical illnesses.

To match the amount raised in mileage, 45 NHG Orthopaedic Surgery residents, faculty, administrative staff and their families took to East Coast Park on Saturday morning, 26 Nov 2022, to walk or run (1km), or cycle (2km) for every \$100 donated, clocking a cumulative distance of 440km.

NHG Orthopaedic Surgery Chief Resident, Dr Chan Juen Zhik, who spearheaded the charity event shared that the charity drive received good support from his fellow residents and senior doctors.

"The decision to collaborate with Make-A-Wish was a collective vote by our residents!" he shared.

"Since this charity event was held during the Christmas period, we all thought that it would be apt for us to come together for a good cause; to make the children's wishes come true."

"When (Dr) Juen Zhik approached me with this idea, I thought it was great," said Dr Muhammad Farhan Mohd Fakil, Programme Director (NHG Orthopaedic Surgery Residency), who was part of the cycling party.

"For the past few community days, we've tried different ways to engage the community ([blood donation drive](#), [virtual motivation workshop for children](#)), so we thought we would try something new this year."

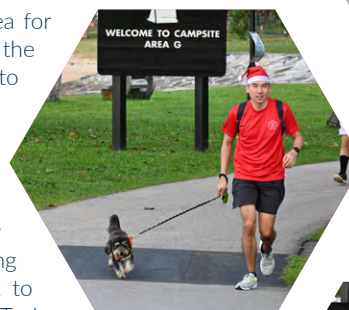
He shared that with adults forming the majority of patients that NHG orthopaedic surgeons treat, being able to do something for children is a meaningful way to give back to the community.

"We (also) thought it's a good idea for our residents and faculty from the three hospitals to come together to support this cause," Dr Farhan added.

When asked about the types of activities and communities that he hopes to see in future community days, Dr Chan said: "For me, (as long as) we can continue giving back to the society as one NHG (Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Woodlands Health) and have a day out together, it will be an unforgettable event!"



Chief resident Dr Chan Juen Zhik leading the cycling party



Running with fur-mily



Residents running with family