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Leadership Moments: Unlocking Barriers to Learning



Mr Tong Yee, Director, Thought Collective

80 senior leaders from across National Healthcare Group (NHG) convened at the bi-annual NHG Leadership Moments held on 23 April. Organised by NHG College at the newly-opened Centre for Healthcare Innovation, the session was a collective conversation on how leadership can unlock barriers to learning, which affects NHG on an organisational systemic level.

Associate Professor Nicholas Chew, Group Chief Education Officer, NHG, shared a story of his own barrier to learning in his opening address. A/Prof Chew recounted a past interaction with a retired Swedish school principal, who quizzed him to identify a long slender bone.

"Fibula," he answered confidently, only to be told that he was wrong, and that it was the "penile bone of a walrus".

A/Prof Chew dismissed the claim and insisted that "there is no such thing as penile bone" – only to realise his mistake after consulting "Google".

"(By) assuming that the (medical) knowledge that I had is applicable to everything else, blinded me to what I actually did not know, so that was my barrier to learning," he said.

Mr Tong Yee, Director from the Thought Collective, guest speaker for this year's Leadership Moments, started the session by facilitating the group of senior leaders in identifying their top barriers to learning.

Noting that "I don't have time" as one of the top common barriers to learning amongst the group, he elaborated that it is not the struggle to find time to complete a specific task, but rather the level of priority given to it.

"When you are in love with a person, a hobby, a job... your learning curve is very high... everything is possible," Mr Tong said. "(And) when you are in love, do you say that you have no time?" he added, sparking a burst of laughter in the room.

"Leadership has a huge influence over the learning habits of the organisation," said Mr Tong, and he stressed that as leaders, developing the awareness and ability to identify the top barriers to learning would help increase the learning curve of the organisation.



Senior leaders from various NHG institutions having discussions

In the second segment, Mr Tong introduced the concept of covert processes or behavioural dynamics within the organisation.

"Sometimes (during a meeting) you agree to do something, but it never gets done... and something else will happen as opposed to what you agreed," said Mr Tong to the laughter in the room.

"If that phenomenon is happening, then you are dealing with covert processes."

Mr Tong explained that leaders (or systems) will only be able to intervene if covert processes are "brought to the table" for conversations, and this applies to the barriers of learning in the organisation.

"The person (leader or employee) who is unaware or not willing to bring these (covert processes) onto the table, is not able to learn," said Mr Tong. "The system is only as strong as what we can bring to the table."

Mini School, Big Aspirations

Mr 'N' was able to pre-empt his impending heart attack four years ago, due to the basic medical knowledge he gained from attending the Mini Medical School (MMS) at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH).

And to express his gratitude, he donated \$10,000 to the MMS on his 60th birthday in 2015.

Like Mr 'N', many other 'graduates' also shared that they are now able to communicate better with their doctors, understand their own medical consultations, and most importantly, they take more interest in managing their own health.

Piloted in 2013, volunteer clinicians from KTPH conduct lessons, talks and seminars on various healthcare topics for the members of the public in a bid to make medical science education accessible, whilst raising public health literacy and self-efficacy.

MMS@KTPH's "provost", Dr Ong Chin Fung, Senior Consultant (Population Health Community

Transformation, KTPH) and Associate Designated Institutional Official (NHG Residency), shared that the concept of MMS is not new. It was first developed by the University of Colorado, Denver, USA, in 1989 with the aims of enhancing the relationship between the medical school and its surrounding community, and it has since gained traction across many universities in the US.

Recognising its potential to promote health education and engage the community, Dr Ong along with a team of like-minded educators at heart (clinicians and administrators) decided to start the MMS at KTPH.

"It was a ground-up initiative," she said. "A few dedicated educators who believe that this work is meaningful and that the public wants to be happy and healthy – if they know the what, the whys, and the hows of common health conditions."

Little did the MMS team know that it would be so well received. Over the years, they had students travelling from as far as Jurong West, Tampines and Bukit Merah to KTPH to attend lessons. And in January this year, the MMS bagged the Excellence Award for Outstanding Innovations in Health Education at the inaugural Asian Elderly Care Awards organised together with the Managing Elderly Care Conference in Manila, Philippines.



< Students reciting the MMS pledge



The first MMS conference held in October 2017

Six years, 14 runs, and 2,000 graduates later, Dr Ong and her team have not shown any signs of stopping. She shared that even though the team feels "totally exhausted after every run", the students continue to fuel them on.

"As a faculty, when you hear the sound of 300 students turning pages and following you attentively as you speak... it's like a music artiste hearing the audience tapping to the sound of your music," said Dr Ong with a smile. "It's amazing."



Quick facts about MMS@KTPH

- Started in 2013
- Average number of students per run: 250-300
- Age of students: 15 – 89 years
- Number of graduates to date: 2,000
- 1 MMS Conference
- 1 MMS Children’s camp
- Received the Excellence Award for Outstanding Innovations in Health Education (Asian Elderly Care Awards)
- **Core team:**
Clinicians Dr Ong Chin Fung, Dr Wong Sweet Fun and Dr Michael Wong Tack Keong
Administrators: Ms Woo Wan Ling, Ms Chai Wan Bao, Ms Sarifah Sukariti, and the MMS@KTPH Family of Volunteers

Teaching Through Stories



^ Participants learning how to script and tell effective stories with their peers.

Professor Yip Chee Chew, Education Director (KTPH) who attended the workshop. “I highly recommend this to all educators.”

“Dr Tanvi Gautam pushed us to capture the imagination of an audience and leave them hanging in anticipation. A highly engaging workshop!” exclaimed participant, Dr Michael Fung, Clinical Core Faculty Member, NHG Emergency Medicine Residency Programme.

Some 30 healthcare professionals from National Healthcare Group (NHG) attended the “Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool” workshop conducted by Dr Tanvi Gautam, CEO of Leadership Inc., on 25 February 2019 at the Yishun Community Hospital.

The one-day workshop organised by the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) Education Development Office and NHG College, was designed to equip NHG faculty with pedagogical tools to help make their teaching sessions lively, engaging and impressionable to their learners.

In her workshop, Dr Gautam expounded on the fundamental concepts of how storytelling could be a powerful communication and teaching tool, by applying effective strategies to prepare and weave stories into the lessons to optimise teaching.

A “fiesta” of lectures, live demonstration and various interactive activities were introduced to help the participants better grasp and apply the concepts taught.

The session was well received by the attendees who found the new skill pragmatic and stimulating.

“This is a humorous, engaging, and eye-opening, yet pragmatic course that helps to improve one’s presentation skills and teaching,” said Associate

Sharing Expertise, Learning from Each Other

National Healthcare Group (NHG) Health Outcomes and Medical Education Research (HOMER) was invited to design a qualitative research (QR) workshop for a group of 20 SingHealth anaesthesiologists and nurses in May 2019. This workshop is part of SingHealth Duke-NUS Anaesthesiology & Perioperative Academic Clinical Programme (ACP)'s efforts to equip SingHealth anaesthesiologists with the basics of QR and help them embark on qualitative research projects.

Over two Saturdays, Dr Mary Lee and Ms Ong Sik Yin from HOMER brought the participants through the basic elements of qualitative research, including various qualitative research methodologies, hands-on activities on data gathering and analysis to help participants build a good foundation of QR principles and skills.

Dr Evangeline Lim, a Senior Consultant anaesthesiologist with KK Women's and Children's Hospital, shared that she and Dr May Mok, a Senior Consultant anaesthesiologist with Singapore General Hospital, decided to engage HOMER's expertise in QR after attending the Clarifying Methodologies for Health Professions Medical Education Research course conducted by Atelier Wilson Centre@HOMER in May 2018.

"We knew there were other anaesthesiologists who were interested in learning about conducting qualitative research properly," she said. "HOMER has the expertise we were looking for to help us develop our



Dr Mary Lee teaching the participants how to code.



^ Participants role-playing in a focus group discussion.

capabilities in qualitative research. That's why we approached Issac (Head, HOMER) and this is how this SingHealth-NHG collaboration was born."

Dr Lim felt that if the ACP had a core group of anaesthesiologists and nurses to start on small scale QR projects investigating important problems with "the correct research paradigms, grounding and foundations", they could grow by getting involved with other QR projects, and mentoring others in the future.

"We really hope for cross-cluster learning opportunities such as this," said Dr Lim. "We think through collaborations, we can bounce ideas off each other to refine our approaches, our research questions and to ensure that we are doing things properly."



Dr Mary Lee (front row, second from right) and Ms Ong Sik Yin, (front row, centre) with the participants from the inaugural HOMER-SingHealth ACP Qualitative Research Workshop.

Congratulations

to the following NHG Educators who clinched prestigious awards at the 2019 NHG Awards!

Lee Foundation – NHG Lifetime Achievement Award



Professor Pang Weng Sun

Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Population Health), NHG
Senior Consultant, Geriatric Medicine, KTPH

NHG Distinguished Achievement Award



Professor Lim Tock Han

Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Education and Research), NHG
Senior Consultant, National Healthcare Group Eye Institute



Associate Professor Alan Ng Wei Keong

Senior Consultant Respiratory & Critical Care Medicine,
TTSH Clinical Educator Lead (Medical)

NHG Distinguished Senior Clinician Award



Dr Wong En Shen Daniel

Programme Director (NHG Diagnostic Radiology Residency)
Senior Consultant, Department of Diagnostic Radiology, TTSH

NHG Education Leader Award



Associate Professor Clare Yeo Kwang Ngee

Clinical Educator Lead (Allied Health), IMH
Senior Principal Clinical Psychologist (IMH)



Ms Lee Yoke Kee

Senior Nurse Educator,
KTPH Nursing Administration (Education)



Associate Professor Yip Chee Chew

Education Director, KTPH
Head & Senior Consultant, Ophthalmology and Visual
Sciences, KTPH



Associate Professor Michelle Jong

Assistant Chairman Medical Board (Education),
Medical Education Office, TTSH
Senior Consultant, Endocrinology, TTSH



Dr Llewellyn Lee Kuang Ming

Programme Director (NHG Ophthalmology Residency)
Senior Consultant, Department of Ophthalmology, TTSH



Ms Tan Keng Teng

Programme Director, National Pharmacy Residency (Geriatrics)
Principal Pharmacist (Specialist), TTSH Pharmacy



Associate Professor Wong Teck Yee

Education Director, NHG Pre-Professional Education Office
Academic Director, NHG College
Senior Consultant, Continuing and Community Care, TTSH