

## FACE TO FACE



Forming Allies, Learning from Others, Growing Together – An Allied Health Story

## e-HAPPENINGS



NUSMedACE2020: Mountains to Overcome, a Shared Horizon to Behold

## HOMER

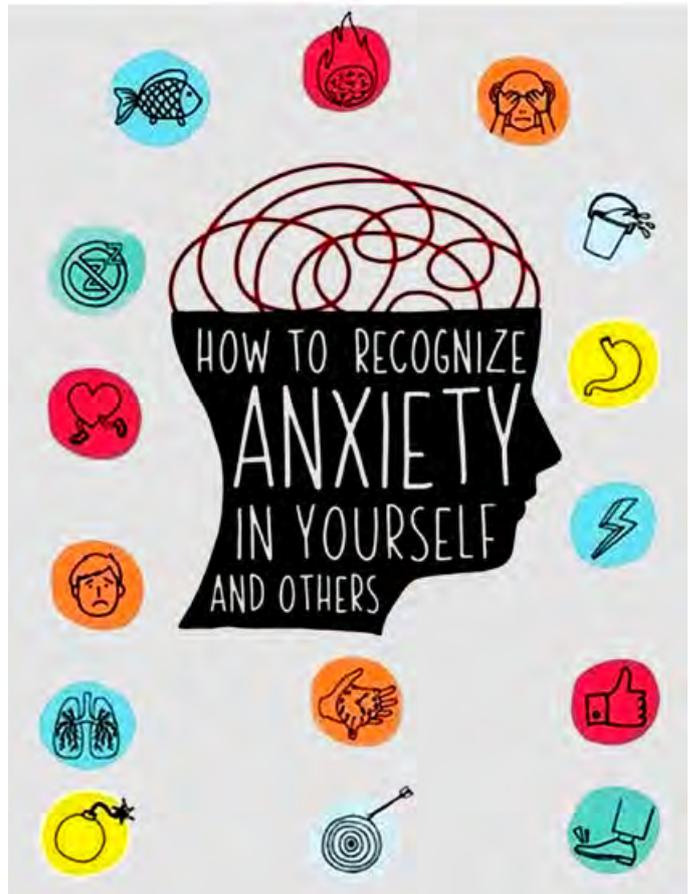


NHG HOMER Clinches Award for Study on Empathy and Compassion in Medical Education

## SEASON GREETINGS



ARTWORK BY MS VICTORIA ANG



Feeling Anxious at the Workplace? Here's a Workshop that may Help

# Forming Allies, Learning from Others, Growing Together – An Allied Health Story

In this bumper issue to wrap up our NHG Education 10th Anniversary (edu10) campaign, we spoke to two Allied Health trailblazers, Ms Susan Niam (Chief Allied Health Officer, Ministry of Health), and Ms Heidi Tan [Assistant Director (Education), Allied Health Division, Tan Tock Seng Hospital], to learn about their journeys from clinicians to taking on educator and leadership roles in Allied Health, and their efforts in shaping and advocating the education and professional development of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) in NHG.

**1. Hi Ms Susan Niam and Ms Heidi Tan, thank you for joining us for this special edu10 feature on AHPs in NHG. Can you share with us a little on your AHP journey, and who or what prompted you to continue your professional development journey?**

**Susan (S):** There were no structured professional development programmes or funding available for AHPs when I started work. It was my supportive ex-boss, who would encourage me to apply for scholarships from other organisations and universities even though we were short of manpower. I eventually graduated with a Masters in Physiotherapy from Australia. I am very grateful for that, and for all the support given to me throughout my professional development journey.

**Heidi (H):** I joined TTSH (Tan Tock Seng Hospital) as an occupational therapist (OT) in 1998 as a new graduate. At that time, the Occupational Therapy department was only less than 20 staff. My OT senior mentored me in the area of ergonomics and work rehabilitation, and I've continued to develop this clinical interest in work rehabilitation and disability management and led this clinical service after he migrated in 2003.

**2. How did you get involved in the education and professional development of AHPs, and why?**

**S:** It was the generosity of my ex-bosses, their mentorship and guidance in the earlier part of my career, and how they taught me to look beyond my available bandwidth and to always provide opportunities and to nurture, develop, and train others that inspired me to be involved in education, and eventually the professional development of AHPs.

It was with great excitement that I was involved as a clinical educator for the first few batches of local physiotherapy students. Many of us took delight in training students because we knew it would make a positive impact to patient care.

**H:** (Looks at Susan) For myself, it was actually Susan who prompted and provided me with the opportunities to do so. (both laugh) I remembered that with the start of the Pre-Professional Education Office in 2013, there was a newly created role for Clinical Educator Leads (CELs) across clinical groups. Susan, who was then the AHS (Allied Health Services) division chairperson, asked if I would like to take this up. At that time, I was the Assistant Director for professional development in AHS, and I felt that taking up this CEL role can help me learn more about clinical education from our more matured counterparts –the



Photo Credit: Ms Susan Niam

Ms Susan Niam



Ms Heidi Tan

medical and nursing groups, who are much more established in education and professional development.

I used to think that teaching is an art, which improves with practice, but I realised that there is a lot of science behind it. I started my Masters in Health Professions Education this year to satisfy my curiosity. I am thankful for my bosses' and peer support in my professional development since a 'young' OT to an 'old' AHP educator (laughs).

**3. How has the development of AHPs, and the training opportunities evolved over the years?**

**S:** Training opportunities in the past were episodic and very much based on personal and departmental preference. Funding was limited and you had to figure out what you want to do in your career. Over the years, this changed, when learning needs analysis was introduced to AHPs. And with this, came appropriate funding for the right programmes that we want to support.

I'm glad that as a division, we saw strength in our diversity. Even though we were all at different levels of growth, we saw the

opportunity to cross learn and work with each other, as well as inter-professional collaborations. Heidi and Hwa Lin were instrumental in linking up the AH and Pharmacy groups. And I would like to commend them for continuing this work, and for taking professional development up a notch further.

**H:** Over the years, as a division, we have moved from an emphasis on service operations to an emphasis on professional development. I think there's a lot more intentional efforts put into looking at how to train each AHP to be a clinical specialist, educator, researcher and leader.

Three key drivers that have influenced the training and development of AHPs in the past 10 years were:

Firstly, the establishment of the Allied Health Professions Council under MOH in 2011, which introduced regulatory requirements for the registration of AHPs and setting high standards for training, conduct and practice of AHPs in Singapore.

Secondly, the introduction of the Pre-employment clinical training (PECT) fund from MOH (since 2013) strengthened the commitment of clinical training providers in offering clinical placements to undergraduate healthcare students.

And thirdly, the launch of AHP programmes by Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) in 2016 opened up more opportunities for AHPs to take up academic roles in Institutes of Higher Learning and collaborate with the universities in applied learning and research activities.

**4. With more structured training and development opportunities being made available to AHP over the years, do you feel that the training gaps have been filled or met the outcomes that were set?**

**S:** I don't think all the gaps will ever be filled. This is an iterative process. We have to continuously review system gaps and patients' needs, and collaborate with other organisations and professional groups to ensure operational applicability, scalability and meaningfulness to the system and our patients.

**H:** Yeah, I think it's very hard to determine if we achieve the outcomes that we've set, since outcome is a dynamic goal and learning is a continuous journey. But we are definitely moving towards a more collaborative kind of approach. Internally

with the clinical departments and externally with the schools, in order to be able to train our healthcare professionals to meet the evolving needs better.

**S:** You're right. And I think we should never get there. It should be aspirational, and be etched on our minds. Otherwise, we will become contented and complacent.

**5. What are some of the areas in education and professional development that the AHP community can or should focus on moving forward?**

**S:** AHP is very diverse, and it is difficult to put a finger on what everyone needs to work on. In general, when you decide to further your studies, or to specialise, the key consideration shouldn't just be about yourself. It's about how you can contribute to the system, your colleagues – including those from other professional groups, and ultimately to your patients' journey and care.

**H:** Yeah, agreed.

I am working closely with the allied health educators to build the capability and identity of AHPs as educators through both formal and informal ways, such as "Coaching Tools for Educators" workshop, "Community of Educators" COP (Communities of Practice), etc.

In the past year, I have also started to work with allied health and nursing educators to develop curriculum for new training programmes, with the aims to help our AHPs build capabilities beyond their traditional job scopes.

An example is Transcend, a trans-disciplinary programme for community health professionals (which started in October 2020) to equip healthcare professionals (working in the community) with broad clinical knowledge and skills, and empower them to provide holistic care for community residents.

Another area of interest from the AHS Education Taskforce is the upscaling of allied health support staff as educators. Many of our experienced support staff, such as therapy assistants, podiatry technicians, have begun to be involved in clinical education of students and young professionals.

Ultimately, our aim is to have every AHP be an educator to our patients, students and peers, striving to empower learners to discover their own individual journey in life-long learning.

**Ms Susan Niam is the Chief Allied Health Officer in the Ministry of Health (MOH) and holds a concurrent appointment as the Registrar of the Allied Health Professions Council that regulates the practice of five allied health professional groups. She is also the Lead of the National Healthcare Group Allied Health Council, the Advisor of Tan Tock Seng Hospital Allied Health and the Chairperson of the Centre for Allied Health and Pharmacy Excellence (CAPE).**

**Ms Heidi Tan is currently Assistant Director (Education), Allied Health Division and Clinical Educator Lead (Therapy), Pre-Professional Education Office at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. She holds a concurrent joint appointment as Occupational Therapy faculty in the Singapore Institute of Technology since 2015.**

edu10

## Discover our edu10 Campaign

Dive into uplifting stories and voices from individuals who helped lay the foundations, inspiring educators and faculty who have trained and changed the lives of many, and the learners who are on this journey with us as we continue to work towards becoming the professionals for tomorrow's healthcare.

**Our Campaign:**

<https://www.nhgeducation.nhg.com.sg/Pages/NewsEvents/Our%2010th%20Anniversary/edu10-Campaign.aspx>

# NHG HOMER Clinches Award for Study on Empathy and Compassion in Medical Education

At the recent AMEE (Association for Medical Education in Europe) 2020 virtual conference, Dr Charmaine Krishnasamy (Principal Research Analyst, NHG HOMER), Ms Loo May Eng (Research Analyst, NHG HOMER), Ms Ong Sik Yin (previously from NHG HOMER), and Professor Jill Thistlethwaite (Health Professional Educator and Family Physician, University of Technology Sydney) received the BEME 2019 Award. They were awarded for the best systematic review in medical education, by the Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) Collaboration in recognition for their study on how medical education affects empathy and compassion in medical students.

Using a meta-ethnographic approach, the study explored perceptions of medical students, patients, and educators on what affects empathy and compassion in medical students; and how education has an impact as well. The researchers found that medical education affects empathy and compassion of students in different ways, and that authentic learning contexts such as hands-on experiences are suitable for the expression of these values among medical students.

"Giving time and attention to active listening, understanding the patient's perspective, providing relief for discomfort, and offering kind gestures to patients, are some of the ways in which empathy and compassion can be demonstrated to patients."

## "Giving time and attention to active listening, understanding the patient's perspective... are some of the ways in which empathy and compassion can be demonstrated to patients."

The researchers also discovered that learning activities and opportunities for students to interact with patients, not only allowed the students to express empathy and compassion to the patients, but it also helped them see patients as unique individuals. And in some of the reviewed studies, the patient's positive response when showed empathy, compassion and care, encouraged the development of empathy in the students.

Factors such as the training environment, role models and the medical culture related to the experiences of the medical students were also explored in the study. The reality of time pressure and constraints in practice, and the need for efficiency also affected their behaviours and expression of empathy or compassion.

The authors advised that medical educators should take into consideration the above-mentioned factors, whilst also maintaining a balance between medical knowledge and expressing empathy in patient-doctor interactions, when developing medical curricula and clinical placements.



Lead author: Dr Charmaine Krishnasamy



Ms Loo May Eng

Read their submission here:

Charmaine Krishnasamy, Sik Yin Ong, May Eng Loo & Jill Thistlethwaite (2019) How does medical education affect empathy and compassion in medical students? A meta-ethnography: BEME Guide No. 57, Medical Teacher, 41:11, 1220-1231, DOI: 10.1080/0142159X.2019.1630731

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Published+Reviews/BEME+Guide+No+57/](https://bemecollaboration.org/Published+Reviews/BEME+Guide+No+57/)

# NUSMedACE2020: Mountains to Overcome, a Shared Horizon to Behold

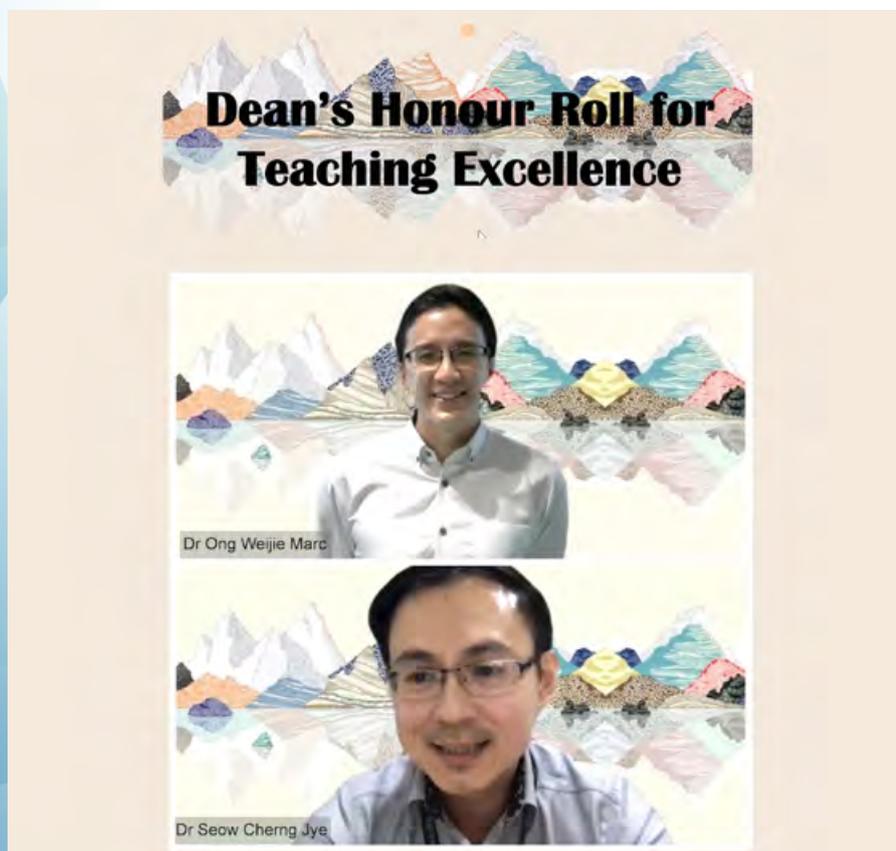
By Ms Loh Jia Hui

65 awards were presented to medical clinicians, departments from National Healthcare Group (NHG), and for the first time, to medical residents at this year's National University of Singapore Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine) Appreciation for Clinical Educators (NUSMedACE) - previously known as NUS Medicine Dean's Appreciation for Clinical Teachers, on 11 Nov 2020. The award was held virtually on Zoom to commemorate the educators' dedication and contributions to medical education.

In his opening speech, Associate Professor Wong Teck Yee, Cluster Education Director (Pre-Professional Education), NHG, took the opportunity to thank all of NHG's educators who "stepped out of their comfort zones to ensure that the students are able to resume clinical training safely, with restrictions in place", and how the educators "modified their teaching methods, all within a very short time frame" during this COVID-19 pandemic.

"I would like to thank NUS Medicine for arranging this event to allow us to reconnect, and also remind ourselves the teaching ethos of our profession," he said.

In his address, Professor Chong Yap Seng, Dean, NUS Medicine acknowledged the teaching efforts of all clinical educators, and applauded their efforts for devising new teaching initiatives to continue the delivery of quality medical education during the COVID-19 pandemic.



This year's dean's honour roll for Teaching Excellence goes to: Dr Marc Ong Weijie (KTPH) and Dr Seow Cherng Jye (TTSH)

"We look forward to fostering further teaching initiatives with you as we adjust to this new paradigm to teach in the new normal," he said.

A virtual award presentation was held in keeping with the spirit of a physical award presentation. Prof Chong congratulated and took photos with the awardees and representatives in the following categories: Clinical Training Excellence Award (department award), Clinical Training Merit Award (department), Dean's Honour Roll for Teaching Excellence, Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence, Junior Doctor Teaching Award and Special Recognition Award.

Associate Professor Lau Tang Ching, Vice Dean (Education), NUS Medicine who also graced the event shared, "As I was watching the event, a few fond memories came to mind as I was very much trained in NHG and in Tan Tock Seng Hospital. One thing that struck me was many of the awardees are senior clinicians whom I have known for many years and yet you continue to win awards. This goes to show that your passion has continued throughout the years and there was no diminishing at all."

Before he concluded the event, A/Prof Lau shared the meaning behind the virtual event's backdrop of "almost insurmountable mountains", where he described as obstacles that both NUS Medicine and NHG can overcome and scale together, reaching a summit, to a horizon that "we can behold together".



Prof Chong Yap Seng, Dean, NUSMedicine



Vice-Dean (Education), NUSMed, A/Prof Lau Tang Ching, Vice-Dean (Education), NUSMedicine

Follow the link to view the full list of NUSMedACE2020 awardees:



<https://www.facebook.com/NHGEducation/posts/3514722515274949>

