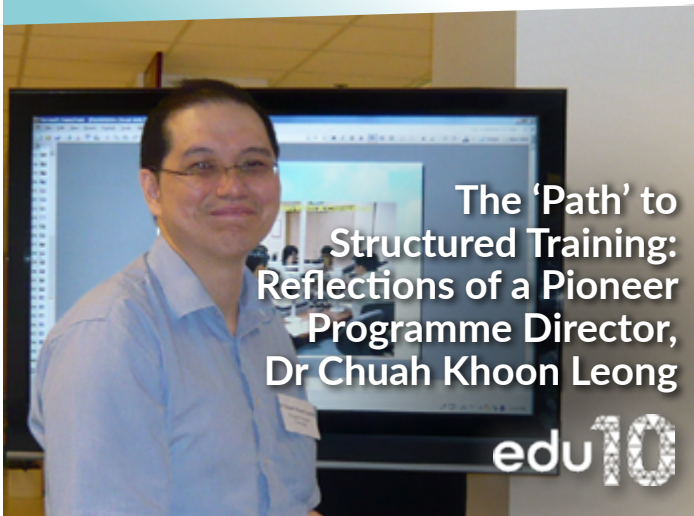


## FACE TO FACE



## VOICES



## HAPPENINGS



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# The 'Path' to Structured Training: Reflections of a Pioneer Programme Director, Dr Chuah Khoon Leong

In the second of a four-part NHG Education 10th Anniversary (edu10) series, Reflections of a Pioneer Programme Director, we spoke to inaugural NHG Pathology Residency Programme Director (PD), Dr Chuah Khoon Leong. We hear his experience on being called upon to helm a new medical specialist training programme, and as one of the first five PDs in NHG Residency.



Dr Chuah (standing, second from left). Tan Tock Seng Hospital Department of Pathology in 2009.

**Hi Dr Chuah, who or how were you approached to be the programme director for your programme?**

I was approached by A/Prof Tham Kum Ying to be the PD for Pathology.

**What was your initial reaction when you were asked to be the programme director?**

I was nervous and uncertain of what to expect.

**What were some of the tense moments/challenges that you encountered during your time as programme director?**

Trying to ensure that the residents were able to rotate through the various institutions, as our Pathology Department in Tan Tock Seng Hospital does not have certain disciplines like O&G (Obstetrics and Gynaecology) and autopsy.

**How did you overcome it?**

There were a lot of negotiating (laughs) and writing to the various heads of departments of partnering institutions.

**Share with us some of the most "fun" or exciting moments as programme director?**

When the first resident graduated from the programme, and did very well in the exams.

**What was your most proud achievement as a programme director?**

My most proud achievement was being able to set up a structured programme for specialist training.

**We understand that the late A/Prof Appasamy Vijayan was part of the first five PDs in NHG Residency. Share with us some of the most memorable moments that you had with him.**

A/Prof V was optimistic and pragmatic. He was always cheerful, and certainly helped the first group of PDs to bind together.

**What's the advice you would give to the current team of PDs?**

Don't give up when the going gets tough. Persevere to see results. And remember that our role is to train safe and compassionate specialists for patient care.



Dr Chuah (left) at the 2010 NHG-AHPL Career Symposium. With him is Dr Tang Yee Lin, the first graduate from the NHG Pathology Residency Programme!



Dr Chuah Khoon Leong is currently a senior consultant, and the Head of Department of Pathology at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. His clinical interest is in Histopathology.



# From Med School to the Wards

By Dr Wee Lin

With the end of my PGY1 (Post Graduate Year One) training in sight, it is hard to believe that one year has passed so quickly. It has been a tiring though fulfilling journey thus far, and I am grateful for the many leaning opportunities and support from my seniors and my fellow PGY1s.



Photo credit: NTU Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine

Dr Wee Lin, a valedictorian in her cohort, giving her speech during her graduation ceremony.



Dr Wee Lin with her family during her graduation



Starting work was definitely a transition I had to get used to, from being a "carefree" medical student to suddenly having to take charge of and making decisions in the wards (albeit with the guidance of my senior colleagues). I am extremely thankful for the seniors who have shown their patience to us newbies, who are unfamiliar with the system, when we make mistakes, and also for taking the time to teach us even in the midst of busy ward rounds.

I remember particularly enjoying and learning from my subspecialty postings at TTSH (Tan Tock Seng Hospital) Endocrine and Renal, as the seniors were particularly pro-teaching. It also provided me with the opportunity to experience a wide variety of hands-on procedures – ranging from learning how to better manage drains in my general surgery posting to doing full septic workups and lumbar punctures on neonates in paediatrics, which I did not have the chance to do in med school.

This past year allowed me to better gain insight into the complexity of human relationships and emotions. I've learnt a lot from my patients and their families – how they cope with a new diagnosis of a terminal illness, how families show support to loved ones who are ill.

It was a privilege to observe first-hand how my seniors handled complex family dynamics during family conferences, and also how they handled delicate issues of death and dying. I am grateful to have been able to observe this across a wide spectrum of settings, ranging from elderly patients where goals of care need to be discussed to optimise quality of life, to young children with congenital conditions that are otherwise also life-limiting.

Looking back, this last one year has had many challenges, taking its toll both mentally and physically. I would definitely not have made it through this year without the support of fellow PGY1s who have selflessly provided help, even when they themselves are learning. They have taught me what it means to be a community, to support one another and to grow and learn together, and moulded me to become a stronger person.

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Dr Wee Lin is currently in her first year of work and is due to finish her PGY1 training in May 2020. She had completed her medical training in Nanyang Technological University Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, and will commence her residency training with NHG Internal Medicine Residency Programme in July this year.

# Behind Closed Doors

Last November, 23 faculty members from National Healthcare Group (NHG) Residency attended the inaugural run of “Behind Closed Doors: Making Defensible High Stakes Decisions in Competency-Based Health Professions Education” workshop organised by NHG College.

The workshop aimed to better equip faculty members in groups and committees such as Clinical Competency Committees (CCC), who are tasked with making high stakes decisions and reviewing learners’ progress at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Course director, Dr James Kwan (Clinical Core Faculty Member, NHG Emergency Medicine Residency Programme), together with facilitators from NHG Residency – who included Dr Ng Wee Khoo, (Programme Director, NHG Internal Medicine Residency Programme); Tracy Tan (Programme Director, NHG Renal Medicine Residency Programme); and Dr Phua Dong Haur (Programme Director, NHG Emergency Medicine Residency Programme)- brought the participants through thought provoking topics such as “Making Better Group Decisions”, and “Avoiding the Pitfalls of Group Decision Making”.

And to illustrate the key principles of decision making, role-playing exercises, and the potential scenarios that may emerge at CCC sessions, facilitators Dr Faith Chia (Designated Institutional Official, NHG Residency), and Dr Sarah Lu (former Associate Designated Institutional Official, Tan Tock Seng Hospital), introduced “The MasterChef Academy” activity, which had the participants grade two popiahs – a popular Singaporean dish- from different stalls, based on taste and general impression.

Many participants shared that they have benefitted from the session.

“It (workshop) helped me to better understand my role as the chairman (of my workgroup),” said one participant. “I would encourage CCC members to attend this workshop.”

For the list of education and faculty development programmes offered by NHG College, visit <https://corp.nhg.com.sg/College/Pages/Programmes.aspx>



Course director, Dr James Kwan (centre, standing) facilitating a group discussion.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The “MasterChef Academy” was replicated at the two-day Continuing Professional Development Programme for Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) faculty in Qatar last November, a local Middle Eastern dessert, baklava was used in place of popiah. The HMC participants enjoyed both the learning points from the activity, and the dessert!

# A/Prof Tham Kum Ying Named One of Southeast Asia’s Kindest Leaders

National Healthcare Group (NHG) Education congratulates Associate Professor Tham Kum Ying, Education Director, Pre-Professional Education Office, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), on being named one of the kindest leaders, in the inaugural Southeast Asia edition of Kindness & Leadership, early in March this year.

A role model to many, and an esteemed figure in the healthcare and education field, A/Prof Tham is also a senior consultant at TTSH Emergency Department, and assistant dean (Year 5) at Nanyang Technological University Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine. She was among 25 Leading Lights across Southeast Asia (listed by UK-based Women of the Future Programme), who are recognised for demonstrating kindness in their leadership, their contributions, and the positive impact that they have left on their respective organisation and industries.

“Leadership with the right amount of kindness is effective, makes the leader approachable and has the best chance of achieving long-term goals,” shared A/Prof Tham on the Kindness & Leadership SEA Our Candidates page. She elaborated that a leader needs to be balanced when expressing kindness; too much results in “the leader at risk of lacking in discipline”, and too little “makes the leader harsh and unapproachable”.



Photo credit: NTU Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine

Follow the link to learn more about A/Prof Tham and the other Leading Lights candidates: <https://kindness.womenofthefuture.co.uk/sea-our-candidate/2020/>