

# SGH Alumni Newsletter

ISSUE 35 | October — December 2021

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SGH PGMI  
Postgraduate  
Medical Institute

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

## Key Leadership &amp; Clinical Appointments

**A/Prof Goh Su-Yen**

Clinical Director  
(Digitalisation & Technology)  
Department of Future Health System  
*Singapore General Hospital*

**Dr Lionel Cheng**

Clinical Director (Artificial Intelligence)  
Department of Future Health System  
*Singapore General Hospital*

**Dr Damien Tan Meng Yew**

Director, Clinical Innovation &  
Technology Unit (CITU)  
*Singapore General Hospital*

**Mr Tan Ewe Kin Melvin**

Chief Communications Officer  
*KK Women's and Children's Hospital*

**A/Prof Deidre Anne De Silva**

Director, Patient Safety & Clinical Quality  
*National Neuroscience Institute*

**Prof Lo Yew Long**

Deputy Medical Director  
(Medical Affairs & Quality Management)  
*National Neuroscience Institute*

**Clin A/Prof Edmund Wong**

Deputy Group Chairman Medical Board  
*SingHealth*

## AWARDS

## NATIONAL MEDICAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2021

Congratulations to Prof Tan Hak Koon for being awarded the National Outstanding Educator Award and Assoc Prof Wong Kok Seng for clinching the National Outstanding Clinician Mentor Award.

Prof Tan is a recognised and respected obstetrician specialising in high-risk obstetric care and maternal foetal medicine. He has dedicated his entire professional life in the public healthcare sector for over 30 years. Prof Tan has contributed to the advancement of obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) clinical care, research and education at institutional, national and international levels. Since the 1990s, Prof Tan has mentored young doctors, medical students, clinician-scientist, nurses and allied health professionals.

A firm believer in nurturing the next generation, Assoc Prof Wong has taught many junior doctors. His students are inspired by his perseverance in pursuing the greater good in Medicine. They are also encouraged to aspire to the next level as they progress in their careers.

## National Outstanding Clinician Educator Award

**Prof Tan Hak Koon**

*Designated Institutional Official, SingHealth Residency  
Chairman and Chief of Obstetrics, Division of Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology, KKH  
Academic Chair, SingHealth Duke-NUS Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology Academic Clinical Programme  
Assoc Dean, Residency Education, Office of Academic and  
Clinical Development, Duke-NUS Medical School  
Clin Prof, Duke-NUS Medical School*



## National Outstanding Clinician Mentor Award

**Assoc Prof Wong Kok Seng**

*Deputy CEO (Clinical Services), SCH  
Senior Consultant, Internal & Renal Medicine, SGH  
Clin Assoc Prof, Duke-NUS Medical School*



*Source: SGH Facebook*

## AWARDS

### SGH RECOGNISED FOR MERITORIOUS SURGICAL OUTCOMES



*Image Source: SGH Infopedia*

The recognition by the American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (ACS NSQIP) places SGH among world leaders for surgical outcomes. The NSQIP is based on clinical data direct from patients' medical charts 30 days after surgery as well as risk-adjusts patient characteristics to compensate for differences among patient populations and acuity levels.

"Taking part in the NSQIP is an important way to safeguard well-being of our patients, by significantly improving the quality of our care.

"We wanted to have a methodology that uses robust, actionable data to measure and improve the quality of our patient care. The NSQIP fits the bill, as it is developed by surgeons who understand the realities of the operating theatre. It allows us to bench mark ourselves against the best hospitals globally using data that are risk-adjusted for our patients' profile. This is unlike other methods of measuring hospital performance which are based on descriptive studies, peer reviews or patient satisfaction surveys," says Associate Prof Tan Hiang Khoo, Chairman of the Division of Surgery and Surgical Oncology in SGH and the National Cancer Centre Singapore.

Read more at: <https://www.sgh.com.sg/news/awards/sgh-recognised-for-meritorious-surgical-outcomes>

*Source: SGH Website*

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS

### RESTORING FUNCTION, EMBRACING LIFE: REGENERATIVE MEDICINE TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

**By Prof William Hwang; Prof Jodhbir Mehta; Prof Karl Tryggvason; Prof Teh Bin Tean; Clin Prof Tan Bien Keem; Clin Assoc Prof Alvin Chua; SingHealth Duke-NUS Cell Therapy Centre**

With the ageing local and global population, regenerative medicine is growing in both interest and importance. From heart and eye diseases to Alzheimer's, find out how the ongoing research and innovation work at the SingHealth Duke-NUS Regenerative Medicine Institute of Singapore (REMEDI) promises to improve medical treatments and patient outcomes.

Regenerative medicine is the science of developing therapeutics and tools to restore diseased tissues and organs. It includes gene therapies, cell therapies, tissue engineered products and small molecules intended to augment, repair, replace or regenerate organs, tissues, cells, genes and metabolic processes in the body.

Read more at: <https://www.sgh.com.sg/news/defining-med/regenerative-medicine-to-improve-patient-care>

*Source: SGH Website*

## WHEN THE LIFELINE FOR DIALYSIS FAILS

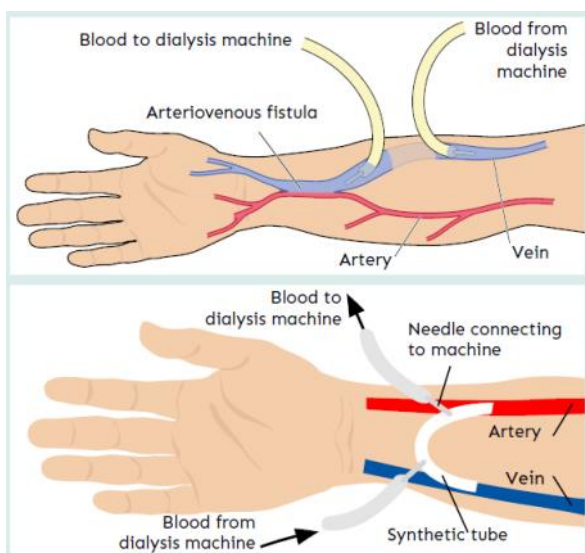
**Singapore General Hospital studies new treatment option for repeated episodes of blocked dialysis access.**

For patients with kidney failure, undergoing regular haemodialysis to remove waste products and excess fluid in the blood is necessary for survival. Essential to this life-saving process is an entry point to access the blood vessels. It is usually created by connecting an artery and vein using a hollow tube (called an arteriovenous, or AV, graft), or by joining an artery and vein in the arm (AV fistula).



The access is so important that it is considered a patient's "lifeline". "Once it is blocked, there is no way the patient can do dialysis," said Associate Professor Tan Chieh Suai, Senior Consultant and Head, Department of Renal Medicine, Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

Yet, an obstructed access is a common phenomenon. A blocked dialysis access is among the most common causes of hospitalisation in patients on haemodialysis.



At SGH, approximately 1,000 procedures are carried out to unclog blocked grafts and fistulas every year. About 70 per cent of patients with a history of a blocked graft require hospitalisation to unclog the dialysis access every six months.

"Understandably, it can be frustrating for patients, as the time and costs of repeated procedures to salvage a failing graft or fistula are on top of their thrice-weekly dialysis sessions," said Prof Tan. A blocked graft or fistula typically takes around one to two hours to clear, and costs about \$4,000 to \$5,000 per treatment.

To explore more ways to keep a patient's dialysis access viable for longer, a team of SGH clinicians from the Departments of Renal Medicine, Vascular Surgery, and Vascular and Interventional Radiology looked into a new treatment option that uses an angioplasty balloon coated with sirolimus, a drug that has been used successfully to prevent repeated narrowing of the coronary artery.

### How the balloon works

The team recruited 20 patients with end-stage kidney failure with a blocked graft between October 2018 and October 2019 to evaluate the efficacy of the sirolimus-coated balloon.

The current treatment to salvage a blocked dialysis graft or fistula involves injecting clot-busting medications, known as thrombolytic agents, into the vessels to dissolve or soften the clot. The narrowed segment of the vessel, which is the root cause of the clotting, is then widened by inserting a plain angioplasty balloon into the affected area.

With the new treatment option, the balloon is coated with sirolimus and inserted under x-ray guidance into the blood vessel.

"When the balloon is inflated, the sirolimus is applied to the narrowed segment of the blood vessel. This prevents the narrowing from recurring, hence preventing the AV fistula or graft from failing again," Prof Tan said.

Read more at: <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/news/singapore-health/when-the-lifeline-for-dialysis-fails>

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS

## EASY ON THE EARS



**Is the COVID-driven tech disruption damaging your ears? Find out how you can keep them healthy.**

Hearing loss may not be a common symptom of the COVID-19 disease. However, as people stay and work at home during the pandemic, and make greater use of personal audio and video devices, hearing-related problems could well become associated with the condition.

“Excessive exposure to sound energy damages the delicate outer and even the inner hair cells of the cochlea. Prolonged exposure results in permanent hearing loss,” said Dr Joyce Tang Zhi En, Associate Consultant, Department of Otorhinolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

To illustrate the damage that can occur from listening to audio devices, consider that the output of personal audio devices can range from 75dB (decibel) to as high as 120dB. Occupational noise exposure, which sets a rough minimum standard for people working in a noisy environment, considers exposure to 85dB over eight hours a day hazardous to hearing. For workers, regular breaks from their noisy workplace are essential.

There are no data to show whether the use of personal devices has increased since the start of the pandemic, but Dr Tang said that tech use was already steadily rising prepandemic. In the United States, headphone use rose 75 per cent between 1990 and 2005, while hearing loss among teens there increased to 5.3 per cent in 2006 from 3.5 per cent in 1994. The 2010 Singapore National Health Survey, meanwhile, showed that nearly 13 per cent of 18 to 29-year-olds have mild hearing loss in at least three of four tested frequencies in at least one ear, said Dr Tang.

Read more at: <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/news/singapore-health/easy-on-the-ears>

*Source: Singapore Health*

## EYE INJECTIONS CAN SAVE VISION

**Intravitreal jabs offer efficacious treatment and hope for patients with various retinal conditions.**

Can eye injections stave off blindness or prevent further vision loss due to retinal conditions? A study by the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) published in the *Ophthalmology Retina* journal in late 2019 found that injections of anti-VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) drugs could arrest vision decline in about 95 per cent of patients with exudative age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The anti-VEGF drugs block the growth of abnormal blood vessels in the eye that affect vision.



“Anti-VEGF injections, the most common among intravitreal (IVT) jabs, or a shot of medicine into the eye, are a game changer in treating exudative AMD,” said Dr Shaun Sim (below), Associate Consultant, Cataract and Comprehensive Ophthalmology Department, SNEC.

Read more at: <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/news/singapore-health/eye-injections-can-save-vision>

*Source: Singapore Health*

## SINGHEALTH PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE 2021



Professor Ivy Ng, Group CEO, SingHealth presenting the cheque to President Halimah with Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State for Health and Mr Cheng Wai Keung, Chairman, SingHealth Board of Directors

**26 November 2021** – After a one-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SingHealth cluster has raised a collective sum of more than \$1.37 million – a record since it first started fundraising for President's Challenge in 2004. This year's campaign, themed "Compassion with #OneKindAct", was led by the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) which celebrates its bicentennial. It also marks 200 years of Medicine in Singapore.

The past two years have been particularly challenging for healthcare workers as they put in many more hours at work caring for many more patients during the pandemic. Despite so, many across the cluster still made time to do their part for the five benefitting agencies it adopted this year for the Challenge – SingHealth Fund (Changi General Hospital HomeCare Assist), South Central Community Family Service Centre, Yong-En Care Centre, Metta Welfare Association and Rainbow Centre.

"It's been an extremely challenging year for us in the rapidly evolving situation of the pandemic. However, we know that many in the community have faced very difficult times too. This was the reason why we decided to again rally the SingHealth family to raise funds for the five benefitting agencies we adopted for the campaign this year. It was uplifting to contribute to this worthwhile endeavour, and I am delighted that we have raised a record amount of more than \$1.37 million through our collective efforts," said Professor Ivy Ng, Group Chief Executive Officer, SingHealth.

Prof Ng presented the final cheque to President Halimah Yacob, at the SingHealth President's Challenge Grand Finale, which took place on Friday, 26 November 2021, at the revamped SGH Museum.

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## EVENTS OVERVIEW

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One of the campaign's key events was the SingHealth Digital Relay that took place from 13 to 14 November 2021. This Singapore Book of Records achievement saw more than 450 staff run 230km in 24 hours, past all SingHealth institutions and polyclinics.



“SGH, with its humble beginnings in the cantonment for British troops two centuries ago, is today a leading hospital globally. A key factor behind this progress is the compassion for our patients. Our strong sense of empathy for our patients is the motivating force behind generations of SGH staff to want to do more to comfort patients and to heal them. It is for this reason that we have chosen this deeply ingrained ethos as the theme for SingHealth President’s Challenge this year, ‘Compassion with #OneKindAct’, to help those in need,” said Professor Kenneth Kwek, Chief Executive Officer, SGH.

After the Grand Finale, Madam President officiated the opening of the revamped SGH Museum, which is housed within the Bowyer Block, a national monument built in 1926. She also viewed a display of items unearthed from a time capsule buried in the Museum in 1996 to mark the Hospital’s 175th Anniversary celebrations and at the same time launched a new digital time capsule to be unsealed at the opening of the revamped SGH Campus in about 20 years’ time. Madam President contributed the first item – a SingHealth President’s Challenge 2021 baton which she autographed – to the digital time capsule.



What's in SGH 1996 Time Capsule which was buried in 1996 when SGH celebrated its 175th Anniversary. This was unearthed and many departments' contributions brought back heart-warming precious memories!

What's in the time capsule, find out here: <https://fb.watch/9F-eXebmpk/>

## FELLOWSHIPS & INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

### Dr Rajat Mahadik from India shares his fellowship experience in SGH, Department of Urology

#### What was your impression of Singapore's healthcare industry?

Singapore healthcare infrastructure is one of the best in the world. Indians are travelling to Singapore for intestinal and liver transplantation having known Singapore General Hospital is ranked top ten best hospital in the world.

#### Are there any differences compared to the healthcare industry in your country?

Yes, India has a larger population and the volume of patients are high. The per capita income in our country is low, so the aim is to attain a high quality and affordable healthcare.

#### Why did you choose to apply to Singapore/SGH for your attachment?

Visited Singapore as a tourist and learned that SGH, Department of Urology pioneering and has high volume of advanced endourology, robotics and laparoscopy that I am interested in.



*Dr Rajat Mahadik (on the right) during his fellowship programme with Department of Urology.*



*Dr Rajat Mahadik (on the left) with Prof Foo Keong Tatt, Emeritus Consultant*

#### Did you face any difficulties (e.g. culture, language) during your attachment? What were they?

No major difficulty face, the doctors and staffs are very friendly. Any information, schedules, meetings, etc. are all informed via email.

#### During your attachment, what was a 'typical' day like?

It was hectic and packed.. Starting the day with clinical meeting and rounds follow by OT. Supervisor will be guiding and informing the cases to scrub in and the expectation. The day would end around 4pm to 5pm. We will have a few OPD sessions per week and short discussion for each cases with the superior. Ending the week with a treats from department colleagues.

#### What were your learning experiences?

It was a great opportunity with many hands-on experiences. My skills for robotic urology, laparoscopy and endourology were enhanced. The important point was refinement of skills during surgeries by the supervisor and many difficulties which I intraoperative faced were discussed.

#### How has the attachment make an impact on you?

My skills were enhanced.

*(continued on next page)*

## FELLOWSHIPS & INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

*(continued from previous page)*

### Do you have any interesting/memorable experience during your attachment that you would like to share?

The partial laparoscopic workshop was an memorable experience to see the same surgery being discussed live by different senior surgeons from all over Asia. It was a great time interacting with them and get to know about their work at their centres. The workshop made me feel a part of Asian urology community and get to know the different Asian cultures. Its a great experience.

### What did you enjoy most during your attachment?

The friendly attitude of Singaporeans which make me feel every moment at home. It was interesting to interact and realised most Singaporeans are well-read. Those conversations from philosophy to science are memorable .



*Dr Rajat Mahadik (on the right) with colleagues from his training department.*

### Would you recommend SGH to interested doctors? Why?

Yes. I am able to have clinical hands on training with structured programme, friendly people and exposure to latest technologies.

### How would you describe your Clinical Fellowship attachment experience in 3 words?

Wonderful, Professional, Interesting

*Photo Credits: Dr Rajat Mahadik*

*(Photos were taken before the issuance of government advisories on COVID-19)*

## WELCOME!

We welcome our new Alumni Member:

Name	Specialty	Country
Dr Antonio David Vincent Jimenez	Orthopaedic Surgery	Philippines
Dr Poh Seng Yew	Orthopaedic Surgery	Singapore



## TELL US WHAT YOU WANT!

We are always looking for ways to improve and engage our alumni members. If you have any suggestions or ideas for newsletter contents or alumni events, know anyone who would like to contribute to the newsletter, please let us know! Email your suggestions and contributions to [alumni@sgh.com.sg](mailto:alumni@sgh.com.sg)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

January 2022

**3RD**

**Virtual Stroke Course**

Presented by SGH Department of Neurology

FULLY  
SUBSCRIBED

**12TH**

**SingHealth ENT-HNS and Chang Gung Memorial Hospital Webinar**

Presented by SGH Department of Otorhinolaryngology

Registration Link: [https://ihis.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Z1kZjHo3SF-pDHn20t7PIA](https://ihis.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Z1kZjHo3SF-pDHn20t7PIA)

**12TH**

**SGH Lunchtime Q+A with GPs**

Advances in Knee and Hip Arthroplasty

Presented by Dr Lincoln Liow, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, SGH

*(Topic to be confirmed)*

Presented by Dr Ng Sue-Ann, Department of Rheumatology & Immunology, SGH

**26TH**

**SGH Lunchtime Q+A with GPs**

Updates in H pylori, Intestinal Metaplasia and Stomach Cancer

Presented by Dr Malcolm Tan, Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, SGH

Thyroid Diseases

Presented by Dr Chng Chiaw Ling, Department of Endocrinology, SGH

## SGH LUNCHTIME Q+A WITH GPs

Have burning questions pertaining to medical care?

Join our clinicians at the SGH Lunchtime Q+A with GPs that takes place on Wednesday from 1pm to 2pm.

Each session, we have our specialists from 1-2 disciplines online to take your questions live.

For more information on the upcoming sessions and to register and pre-submit your questions, please click on the below link (internet access required):

<https://ihis.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJErfu-trDMjHtQ7m2fzvFOdXdCS6u3hXtnn>

Please refer to our website <https://www.sgh.com.sg/pgmi> for events updates.

*SGH-PGMI wishes all a*



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*Merry Christmas*

*&*

*a Blessed New Year!*

Photo Credits: Christmas vector created by [pikisuperstar/freepik](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/Christmas-vector)

**SGH ALUMNI NEWSLETTER**

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