

# LEADING HEALTHCARE

The newsletter of the Healthcare Leadership College



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About The Healthcare Leadership College

It has now been almost 5 months since Singapore saw our first Covid-19 case in late January 2020. As the number of patients grow, our thoughts and well wishes are with our healthcare family colleagues who are working hard on the frontlines of the healthcare institutions, in the foreign worker dormitories, in the care and recovery facilities, and in administration, planning and leadership.

We hope that this issue of Leading Healthcare will both provide all of you with useful learning as well as light-hearted moments. Prof Chua Hong Choon, CEO (IMH), shares with us leadership principles learnt over the years, including difficult moments during SARS, and challenges us all to rise to the occasion and "offer the leadership". Look out for our mini-quiz which calls for some unconventional and fishy thinking. For those of you who have some time to rest and take a break, the movie Finding Nemo may be a good choice to watch, for it offers a joyous and optimistic reminder of how resilience and teamwork can overcome great challenges.

As Dory would tell us all, Just Keep Swimming!

# Dean's Message

## A Better Singapore

The circuit has been broken and COVID-19 is under control in Singapore. Community transmission is very low, the situation in the foreign worker dormitories has been stabilised, and Providence has ensured that our workers are for the most part doing well.

It is a good time for us to look back and reflect.

Crises show the true character of a person, crises also show nations what their national character is. The cracks, the failings, the reactions, and also the successes.

In the past four months, we have learned much about ourselves. After our initial success, we were dealt a humbling blow, both nationally and internationally, by the outbreak in the dormitories.

Beyond this storm, beyond the national and international repercussions, there have been positive elements. For one, the living conditions of our workers have now become widely known. This has led to serious discussions over the issues, both economic and moral, that have arisen, and has sparked action for positive change.

It is the response of our people on the ground that has been the most heartening. And that of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. He said, "To our migrant workers, let me emphasise again: we will care for you, just like we care for Singaporeans. We thank you for your cooperation during this difficult period. We will look after your health, your welfare and your livelihood. We will work with your employers to make sure that you get paid, and you can send money home. And we will help you stay in touch with friends and family."

We also have learned how to do things differently.

As many have commented, we cannot return to our old ways. Hopefully, having experienced a "shaking of the spirit", as a nation, we must become less complacent and less concerned about material gains. We must become more values driven and more compassionate.



**Professor Aymeric Lim**

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**Prof Chua Hong Choon**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Institute of Mental Health

# Letter to our Young Leaders

## Prof Chua Hong Choon

Prof Chua Hong Choon is Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Clinical) of the National Healthcare Group (NHG) in Singapore. A psychiatrist by training, Prof Chua is also the Chairman of the national Residency Advisory Committee (RAC) for Psychiatry and Adjunct Associate Professor at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, Yong Loo Lin Medical School and Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

### Dear Young Leaders,

The leadership journey can be uncertain, sometimes lonely, but most often fulfilling. On my own journey, I have stumbled and picked myself up many times. Here are some of the most important lessons I have taken to heart.

#### Be true to yourself. Who you are as a person, reflects who you are as a leader

We all have our own intuitive leadership style – you can be consultative, directive, participative, negotiative or delegative. I am quite consultative as a clinician, taking inputs from my fellow clinicians, colleagues and also getting my patients involved in their treatment and recovery.

However, there are also situations in which your preferred leadership style may not work. In such times, you need to be adaptive and change your usual leadership style to lead in a different way. I have learnt that in certain situations especially in a crisis, I have to step up and lead in a different way. Let me give you an example – in 2003 when SARS hit Singapore, we had a fever outbreak at IMH and I was the Infection Control Chairman then. I had to step out from my usual consultative style and lead in a more command and control way. I had to make difficult decisions during the crisis and we were able to steer the institution through those challenging times.

#### Invest in people. Embrace diversity and be inclusive, for this makes the team stronger

I have always believed in a diverse and inclusive organisational culture. I believe we can include and embrace everyone in our workplace including older workers, ex-offenders, people with disability, people with mental health problems, as well as patients who have recovered from major illness. They are an untapped resource with so much potential that we can harness. Unfortunately, they are usually faced with discrimination, pity, misgivings and often face difficulty in getting employment. Thus, what is the meaning of dignity for them? We should not exclude them

**However, there are also situations in which your preferred leadership style may not work. In such times, you need to be adaptive and change your usual leadership style to lead in a different way.**

but be more proactive in tapping their potential, creating work opportunities for them at the workplace. This may include customizing work for them so that they can fit in. We should take the first step to change things. Ask yourself – will you accept people with disability in your team?

### If you want change, can you also offer the leadership?

We can all exercise leadership wherever we are – you need not necessarily be at a senior position to do that. When you are a young leader, you have a lot of new ideas and like to introduce changes to improve the current order of things with the good intention of improving patients' lives. Yes, you can do that – be courageous to make the right changes to improve the current systems/processes. However, you also need to offer the leadership to lead, implement the change and this includes taking responsibility, accountability for the changes you are proposing. Imagine how much we can harness from everyone if we have a culture of distributed leadership, shared responsibility and collective leadership at every level!

Over the years, I have made mistakes, learnt many things and I am still learning new lessons to this day. When the way ahead is uncertain and unclear, the leadership principles which I hold dearest, have always guided me well. May these lessons likewise help you and act as beacons to show you the way on your own journey.



**Be courageous to make the right changes to improve the current systems/processes. However, you also need to offer the leadership to lead, implement the change and this includes taking responsibility, accountability for the changes you are proposing.**



# JUST KEEP SWIMMING

## Facing adversity with resilience and optimism

The Disney/Pixar film Finding Nemo was first released in 2003, but continues to captivate adults and children alike, for its memorable characters and wonderful story. Most importantly, the movie holds some important life lessons for children and adults alike.

One of the most memorable phrases from Finding Nemo, is “Just keep swimming”. In the movie, this phrase is most often spoken by Dory, the aquatic Good Samaritan who offers to help Marlin, a clown fish, find his only son Nemo. While Dory may seem an odd partner for such a quest, her optimistic spirit turns out to be an invaluable quality in helping Marlin. During the journey, Marlin faces many obstacles and continually thinks about giving up. Dory keeps him going with her positive spirit, including a catchy ditty, ‘just keep swimming’.

### How Do We “Just Keep Swimming”?

In the current Covid-19 pandemic which is throwing up severe and intense challenges across the healthcare, economic, and financial fronts, many of us may feel like Marlin – frightened, exhausted, and lost. As healthcare leaders, in addition to the work on the frontline and planning for upcoming contingency scenarios, many of us may also be called on to take on new, unfamiliar roles during this crisis: cheerleader to galvanise our teams; counsellors to provide emotional support to team members, home-school teachers and so on.

How do we then find our inner Dory and remind ourselves to “just keep swimming”, even when all these multiple and intense demands keep filling up our hours?

It is easier said than done, but do **remember that self-care is critical**, so that you can continue to sustain the intensity of work and be at your best for others. Common self-care tips that may help you and your team members keep swimming:

- Get sufficient rest and exercise
- Pause and reflect for a few minutes each day
- Engage in hobbies and creative pursuits
- Appreciate the good things in each day







## Give your Team A Shared Purpose: “Swim Together!”

In one of the most powerful scenes from Finding Nemo and arguably one in which the phrase “keep swimming” is uttered with greatest impact, Nemo leads a school of grouper to break free of a fishing boat’s net.

To save Dory, who is also trapped in the net, Nemo tells all the grouper to “swim down!” together. Listening to his plan, all the trapped fish swim furiously in the same direction, chorusing loudly to each other “Keep Swimming! Swim Together!”. Eventually, they break the net with their combined force and swim free.

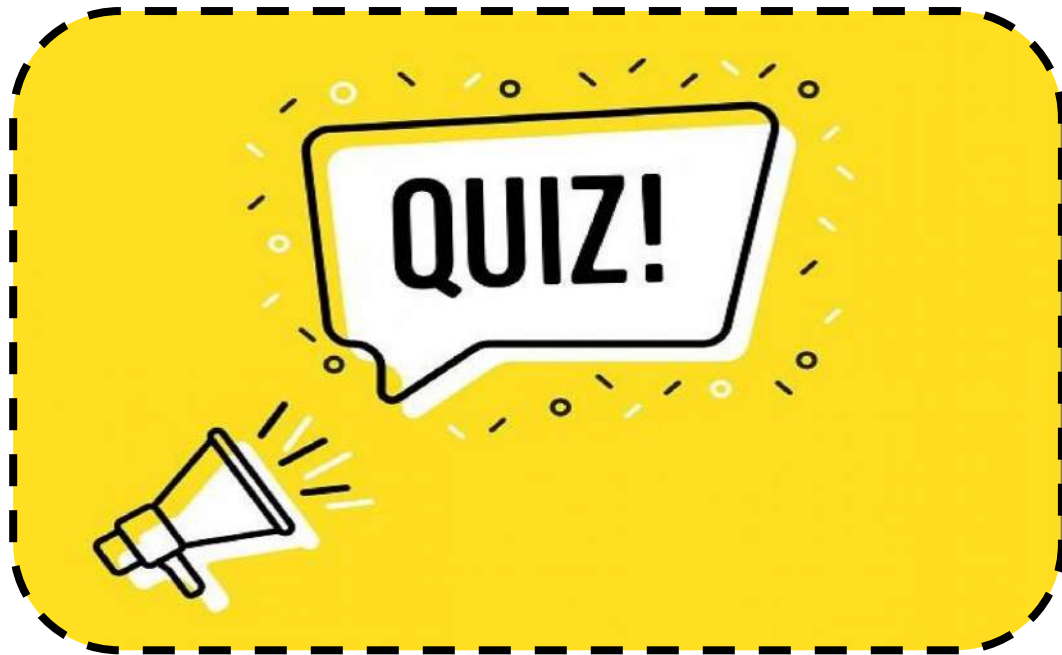
Just like the grouper trapped in the net, when faced with a new and threatening situation, a common natural instinct is to start panicking and doing something. Very

often, people end up going in different directions and acting at cross purposes to each other.

In crisis situations, leadership is most critically needed. Leadership is needed to: take charge, calm people down, form a sound plan, communicate the plan, and galvanise everyone to act on the plan together. Hence as leaders, the most important role that we can play right now, is to give our team members purpose and direction, so that they work together single-mindedly to achieve their mission.

Keep swimming, friends, colleagues, fellow Singaporeans. We will come through this together.

***“In crisis situations, leadership is most critically needed. Leadership is needed to: take charge, calm people down, form a sound plan, communicate the plan, and galvanise everyone to act on the plan together. Hence as leaders, the most important role that we can play right now, is to give our team members purpose and direction, so that they work together single-mindedly to achieve their mission.”***



① **Which fish operates in the hospital?**

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

② **Name 3 leaders who have spoken at HLC's Distinguished Speaker Series (DSS).**

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

First 5 readers who reply with the correct answers will win a special handmade soap by HLC. Email your answers to [hlc@mohh.com.sg](mailto:hlc@mohh.com.sg).

## About the Healthcare Leadership College



The Healthcare Leadership College (HLC), a division of MOH Holdings, supports the building of strong leadership capacity and capabilities for our national healthcare system, in line with the Ministry of Health's vision and strategic priorities. We develop and deliver high quality programmes and other learning platforms for public healthcare leaders, covering topics such as leadership and organisational development, public service ethos and values, and key healthcare policies and issues. *Find out more here: [www.hlc.mohh.com.sg](http://www.hlc.mohh.com.sg)*

### Leading Healthcare Team

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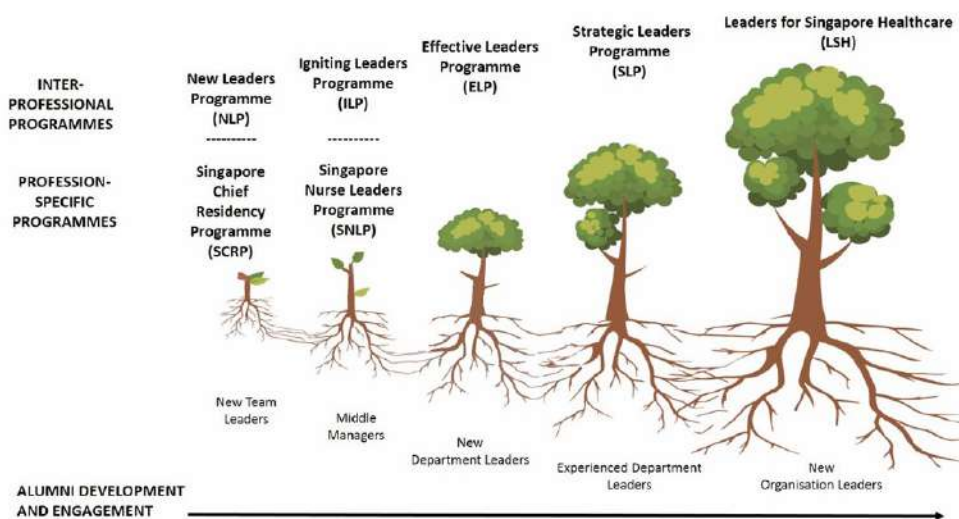
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# Leadership Milestone Programmes (Cross-Profession)



- Foster a **one healthcare family** mindset
- Build **shared values and ethos** amongst public healthcare leaders
- Develop understanding of **key healthcare policies**, the rationale and principles behind the policies
- Strengthen **leadership capabilities** of healthcare leaders to enable change and drive strategies to transform healthcare delivery
- Nurture a **community** of healthcare leaders across professions and across the healthcare family and professions

## New Leaders Programme (NLP)

### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS



The NLP supports the development of high potential first time team leaders in the healthcare family.

The transition from being an individual contributor to leading a team is a significant and challenging milestone. The NLP encourages participants to explore their new role: How does the Singapore healthcare system work? What is my role in the larger healthcare system? What does it mean to lead? What does it mean to lead in the healthcare family?

The NLP also provides opportunities for participants to network across healthcare institutions and professions.

**Programme Manager: Ms Chu Min Lian  
Ms Goh You Li**

## Igniting Leaders Programme (ILP)

### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

The Igniting Leaders Programme (ILP) aims to strengthen participants' systems perspectives by providing opportunities for them to examine our healthcare philosophy and policy choices, and understand our larger strategic goals and priorities. This also helps participants understand one another's role in the healthcare system.

The ILP will enable participants to gain insight into their own leadership practice, especially in building their teams, and allows them to re-ignite their sense of purpose in healthcare. The ILP will also be an important platform for participants to foster peer support networks across healthcare institutions and professions.

**Programme Manager: Ms Carol Tang**



## Effective Leaders Programme (ELP)



### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

The ELP is designed to deepen participants' understanding of the healthcare system – its complexity and strategic direction, and widen their perspectives beyond the professional and institutional viewpoints.

The ELP also supports participants in reflecting on their personal leadership practice, and focus on driving change and building teams with a collective mission.

The programme emphasises the building of shared experiences and perspectives among participants, and fosters a trusted peer support community for mutual support and collaboration.

**Programme Manager: Mr Jared Koh**

## Strategic Leaders Programme (SLP)

### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

The SLP will support our senior leaders to adopt a one healthcare mindset, and appreciate the importance of a whole of system approach that include perspectives beyond healthcare.

Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their collective leadership and collaborative practice as they lead larger and more diverse teams within and across healthcare institutions.

The SLP is also designed for participants to deepen networks and relationships among their peers to strengthen collaboration in the healthcare family.



**Programme Manager: Ms Chu Min Lian**

## Leaders for Singapore Healthcare (LSH)



### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

The Leaders for Singapore Healthcare (LSH) is HLC's new signature programme for senior healthcare leaders with organisational level responsibilities.

As senior healthcare leaders, participants will examine their roles as leaders of and for the Singapore health eco-system, with a larger influence across institutions and clusters, and beyond public healthcare.

The programme is conducted over four months, in four segments, and includes a study trip.

**Programme Manager: Ms Karyn Choo  
Ms Angie Chang**

**\*Please contact respective managers for more information.**

## Profession-Specific Milestone Programmes

### Singapore Chief Residency Programme SCRП



#### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

Singapore's healthcare landscape is evolving rapidly with new delivery systems, policies, and educational structures. In this time of transformation, effective physician leadership is essential, and the Singapore Chief Residency Programme (SCRП) prepares tomorrow's doctors to meet these challenges, promote excellence in the medical education, and advance Singapore's Public Healthcare System.

**Programme Manager: Mr Alfred Cheong**

### Singapore Nurse Leaders Programme (SNLP)

#### PROGRAMME SYNOPSIS

The Singapore Nurse Leaders Programme (SNLP) is developed as part of the Future Nursing Career Review Committee's (FNCRC) recommendation to equip future nursing leaders with prior experience in community care before progressing to take on higher leadership positions.

With an increasingly system-level approach towards nursing at the RHS-level, the programme is designed to equip nurses with the necessary knowledge and skills to lead care across multiple facilities- acute and community sectors. The SNLP aims to groom level 2 nurse leaders to be change agents with strong leadership and policy perspectives, and this is achieved via a 2-prong approach, in-person seminars and attachment to the community care sector.



**Programme Manager: Ms Goh You Li**

## Alumni Events

The College also hosts events and talks for alumni of its milestone programmes, such as fireside chats with senior healthcare leaders, policy workshops, and learning journeys. Alumni events are open by invitation only, and most fees are fully subsidised by the Healthcare Leadership College.

**Programme Manager: Ms Carol Tang  
Ms Nicole Lee**

**\*Please contact respective managers for more information.**



A DIVISION OF  
**MOH HOLDINGS**

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