

LEADING HEALTHCARE

The newsletter of the Healthcare Leadership College



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About The Healthcare Leadership College

What makes a good leader? We pose this question to participants at some of our milestone programmes. The answers are invariably diverse. Some say that they look up to leaders who are decisive and willing to make courageous hard choices. Others mention bosses who are flexible and open to new ideas. Many also share their memories of caring and nurturing leaders.

In this issue of Leading Healthcare, we pay tribute to good leaders. Susan Niam, Chief Allied Health Officer, shares her thoughts about how it is critical for leaders to continually learn, unlearn, and relearn. Our HLC alumnus Dr Luke Low from Sengkang Community Hospital pens a reflective article on lessons learnt from kite-flying to good leadership: how the most effort is needed to launch the kite at the start; how constant interplay between guiding and letting go is needed to enable the kite to continue climbing well; then finally when the kite is cruising well, for the kite-flyer to step back and enjoy the beauty of the kite.

Almost 10 years ago, the Healthcare Leadership College started off with a skeleton team that had little experience. However, they had on their side a highly committed Dean who believed in the importance of leadership in the public healthcare family and held a steely conviction about leadership founded on immutable values. The journey has not been all smooth-sailing, but after 10 years, the HLC kite is now flying high and well, and Aymeric, who has served as Dean for 10 years, is now embarking on his next adventure of service and contribution in public healthcare.

As the College bids farewell to Aymeric and wishes him well, let me borrow a line from Aymeric's favourite book, *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien. In one of the scenes in this book, the great eagles carry Gandalf the wizard, Bilbo Baggins the hobbit, and the company of dwarves to safety, and bring them closer to their destination. As they part ways, Gandalf, Bilbo, and the dwarves say their goodbyes to the eagles, "May the wind under your wings bear you where the sun sails and the moon walks."

Dean's Message

The Second Law of Thermodynamics is an exorable fact of nature. It applies to all physical systems and biological systems and human organizations large and small.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that the entropy of an isolated system will always increase over time. This means that decline and disorder are inevitable unless energy is applied.

More than a decade ago it was noted that there had been some erosion of the values of the public healthcare system. There was an erosion of the noble sense of purpose of our public healthcare institutions and there was an erosion in the values of many of those who were practicing inside and outside these institutions. Ms Yong Ying-I who was the Permanent Secretary of Health at that time was alert to this concern and she set up the Healthcare Leadership College in 2012.

Before that, a few healthcare leaders which included our current Director of Medical Services, A/Prof Kenneth Mak and the current Cluster Group Chief Executive Officers were sent by the Ministry of Health to learn from the King's College in London, the de facto leadership college for the UK's National Health Service. It is a fine institution with deep knowledge of the delivery of care, building on the noble aims of the NHS founded in 1948 providing free healthcare for all.

We are a young country and during their session with us there was one thing however which left us – a sense of having no anchor. It was Prof Yeoh Khay Guan who put his finger on it and said that while the emphasis was on competence and systems, they did not talk about values. When we returned, we decided to make values our foundation. The Healthcare Leadership College was formed and the first director was Mr Donald Low. He was dynamic and visionary and the charter which was set then still guides the College today.



Our first logo was a tree outline. The sense and need to affirm values remained very strong and we found ourselves drawing the root system of our tree larger and larger until it occupied fully half of the circle. The tree and its roots has come to take on a deep symbolization of who we are and what we stand for.



Professor Aymeric Lim
*Dean, Healthcare Leadership College
Chief Executive Officer,
National University Hospital
Senior Consultant, Department of
Hand & Reconstructive Microsurgery,
National University Hospital
Professor, Department of
Orthopaedic Surgery, Yong Loo Lin
School of Medicine*

The College got off to a blazing start. We set up a number of milestone programmes for senior and mid-level leaders, some of which still exist today. During this time we kicked off a new initiative under the leadership of A/Prof Arpana Vidyarthi, the Singapore Chief Residency Programme (SCRP). It has now trained eight cohorts of the most promising young doctors in Singapore, many of whom are now in leadership positions. The current SCRCP Programme Director is Prof Lim Boon Leng who continues to steward the development of our young doctor leaders.

In our second year, a new director, Ms Lai Wei Lin, came onboard. At that time, the College wanted to benchmark itself with international programmes and we partnered the University of Berkeley to deliver the Global Health Leadership Forum in Singapore. It was a steep learning curve for us but with the team pulling together, we were able to deliver a great programme which was as good as the ones in Berkeley and London. I will always be thankful to the Managing Director of MOHH, Mr Goh Aik Guan who provided very important support for this programme at a critical juncture and has always been a great friend of the College.

But this was also a hard time for the College as there had been many changes in the team and we were unable to get out of the storming phase of team evolution. The healing process started with Mr Tan Kwang Cheak, the College's third Director. The theme for our programs in those days was: 'think up', referring to an awareness and understanding of healthcare policies; 'think across', meaning to work together across clusters, institutions and professions; and 'think beyond', or making changes now in anticipation of future challenges. During this time, even in the midst of grappling with its internal challenges, the College continued to plan for the future of leadership development in Singapore healthcare and how we could continue to move forward.

The College finally moved from the norming phase to the performing phase with its fourth Director in its 4th year, Ms Lee Shiao Wei who through her moral courage transformed the team and brought it to where it is today.

The focus of the College has now shifted from programmes to people. But the aims remain similar: to impart an understanding of our healthcare policies; to strengthen leadership competencies and capacity; and to forge a sense of community throughout our healthcare clusters, agencies and partners. These aims support the 'Three Beyonds' of the Ministry of Health.

In recent years we have introduced two new programmes, the Singapore Nurse Leaders Programme (SNLP) and the apex Leaders for Singapore Health (LSH). It is inspiring to see the passion and the abilities of our young nurses bridging the gaps between the acute institutions and the community. Our most senior programme, the LSH is into its second run and validation again has come to the College when participants, some of whom have progressed onto CEO and CMB positions, have deep impressions of the breadth and depth of knowledge gained and the relationships that were forged during their time together.

There is no better time to handover the College to Professor Pang Weng Sun, someone who throughout his career in public service has epitomised what we aspire to achieve through his values, his sense of compassion and also his strength in justice. I would like to thank the previous Permanent Secretaries: Ms Yong Ying-I, Mrs Tan Ching Yee and Mr Chan Heng Kee; the current Permanent Secretary Mr Chan Yeng Kit; the previous Director of Medical Services A/Prof Benjamin Ong; and the current DMS A/Prof Kenneth Mak; for their strong support and trust in the College. I would also like to thank my team, especially Dennis, Pacillia, and Karyn, who have made invaluable contributions to the College over many years and helped bring the College to a new high.

We will realise in a year's time that the healthcare of Singapore is in really good hands, sensible and compassionate with great leaders on the ground. These 10 years have been a privilege.



Ms Susan Niam
Chief Allied Health Officer
Ministry of Health

Letter to our Young Leaders

Ms Susan Niam

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 5 allied health professional groups. She is also the Chairperson of the National Healthcare Group Allied Health Council.

At MOH, Susan oversees policies concerning allied health workforce and professional capabilities development. She also provides professional leadership and oversight in facilitating the development and deployment of impactful models of care to catalyse more effective care transition to the most appropriate settings.

Prior to her part-time appointment in MOH in 2018, Susan was the Chairperson of Allied Health Services and Pharmacy Division at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Susan has been an active volunteer in several community organizations and associations for more than 20 years.

I knew that it was of paramount importance to dust down my wounded ego and muster up my courage to unlearn and discard my assumptions and beliefs, and relearn to be more patient-centric and to adopt a systems thinking mindset.

Dear Young Leaders,

Reflecting on your leadership style is critical for your leadership growth and development. Here are some lessons which I would like to share with all of you.

Learn, Unlearn, and Relearn

The late Mr Alvin Toffler wrote that “*the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.*” This has always been my motto in my own leadership journey.

When I was a very young Physiotherapist, I was given an opportunity to conduct research. I had expected a positive response when I presented my draft to my Director but to my horror, my Director pointed out my mistakes in the presence of all my colleagues, and irritably challenged me to redo the entire project. Embarrassed and extremely discouraged, I thought that this blooper would spell the end of my career. While I resented my Director’s harsh approach, I knew that it was of paramount importance to dust down my wounded ego and muster up my courage to unlearn and discard my assumptions and beliefs, and relearn to be more patient-centric and to adopt a systems thinking mindset. The study was eventually accepted by my Director and submitted for a competition. To my surprise, I won the top award in the competition for this research. My director is nearly 80 years old now and we laughed about such past incidents over dinner.

This journey was painful but it made me a more persistent and resilient person, and taught me a number of life lessons that I still hold dear today. *Firstly, I learnt that failures may hurt us at first, but we should not let them define who we are. Instead we should always seek to learn from every situation, get used to unlearning and enjoy relearning. Secondly, we should always be thankful, respectful and keep lasting relationships with people who had taught and guided us.*

Be Curious - Broaden Your Perspective and Network

In the past, there were limited opportunities to attend leadership and clinical development programmes, so I decided to be actively involved in the Singapore Physiotherapy Association's council and committees. I also volunteered in various organizations locally and overseas, read leadership books and scientific articles, and studied overseas practices and frameworks to broaden and balance my perspectives. I learnt from different healthcare professionals and widened my network of friends outside healthcare to expand my world view, avoid groupthink, and applied my learnings from other industries to healthcare.

One of the greatest challenges I faced, when I first started practising as a Physiotherapist, was the language barrier with my patients from Tamil speaking backgrounds. While I was conversant in the Malay language and most Chinese dialects, I struggled with developing a personal connection with patients who only spoke Tamil. At that time, there were no official interpreters or language courses for healthcare workers. Hence, I sought the help of Rajan, my Indian assistant, to teach me Tamil so that I



I learnt from different healthcare professionals and widened my network of friends outside healthcare to expand my world view.

could better understand my patients' needs and convince them to persevere with the rehab treatment.

As you continue to grow in your leadership journey, I hope you will learn from every opportunity, adopt a growth mindset and be open to unlearning and relearning and broaden your horizon and expand your network.





>> A Toast to Everlasting Friendships



>> A Toast to Cross Cluster Friendships

Thank You, our Dean

In 2012, the Healthcare Leadership College was set up with Prof Aymeric Lim as the founding Dean. Over the past 10 years, Aymeric has provided not just strong leadership to the College, but has also been a caring coach and friend to the HLC team. Here, Team HLC pens our words to show our immense appreciation to and well wishes for our founding Dean.



*Adventures new await you as you bid farewell to HLC
Years spanning ten that you've journeyed with us
Moral Courage what you always reminded us to hold on to
Execute well! Your favourite exhortation that the best-laid plans fall apart without good implementation
Remember all the good times and difficult times that we experienced together
In our hearts you will always have as a special place as our founding Dean
Community, leadership, and values the greatest gifts that you gave us.*

Shiao Wei

Thank You Prof Aymeric!

As founding Dean of HLC,

Prof Aymeric led the college during its fledging days and guided its development over the years.

Under his stewardship, HLC is proud to have contributed towards the development of healthcare leaders over the past 10 years.

Thank you Prof Aymeric for always being there for HLC.

Yvonne



Dear Aymeric,

*Aymeric, Thank you for seeing us through over the years,
When we faced stormy waters you are always near.*

*Aymeric, Thank you for leading us through over the years,
Showing us our compass pointing north for us to gear.*

*Aymeric, Thank you for guiding us through over the years,
Helping us to have strength, overcoming our fears.*

*Aymeric, Thank you for shaping us through over the years,
Building our character, strengthening us in every sphere.*

We will miss you dearly, Dean.

Thank you,
Min Lian



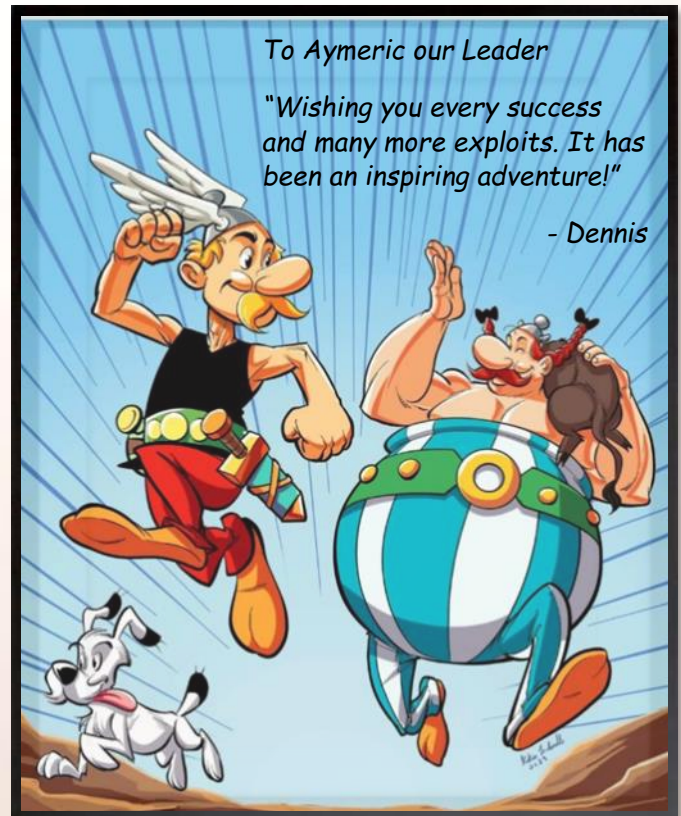
Dear Aymeric,

Although it's been a short time, it has been a pleasure to meet you and the warm welcome as I join HLC.

Thank you for all you have done for HLC and SCRP programme.

Though I am sad to see you go, I wish you all the best and I know that you will go on to impact many others in your career.

Regine



Dear Aymeric,

Thank you for your unwavering support and guidance to SCRP over the past 8 years! Your knowledge, impact and influence are strongly felt by every one of us. Over the last 3.5 years of my time in HLC, you have shown lots of encouragement to all of us and we hope to further engage you in other ways possible in the near future!

Cheers,
Alfred Cheong



HAPPINESS IS



...being in a team.

Your towering presence was always inspiring
Your reassuring words were stress busting
Your constant support was highly motivating
Without you, there will not be HLC.
Farewell to a boss, whom we will be missing

Thank you Aymeric for everything to make this
team incredible!

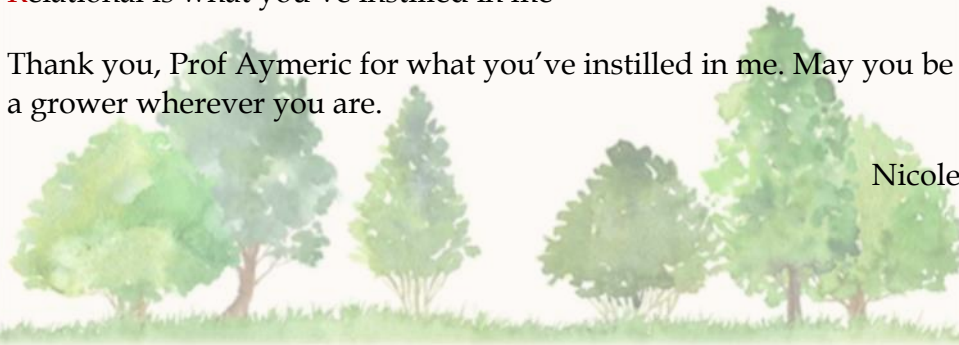
Regards,
Carol

Prof Aymeric, you're a Grower.

Grooming leaders is at the core of your heart
Relationship nurturing by getting to know each one of us in HLC
warms my heart
Outward focus is what you've inspired me
Warfare leadership training is what I've learnt from you
Empathy and Encouragement is what I've experienced from you
Relational is what you've instilled in me

Thank you, Prof Aymeric for what you've instilled in me. May you be
a grower wherever you are.

Nicole



~ Dear Aymeric ~

Thank You
for being our
Inspiration.
Wishing You
Good Health,
Success and
Happiness in all
of your Pursuits.

Pac
2021





Dear Aymeric,

And, it's time to bid farewell, dear Sir Aymeric.

You've been such an inspiring and caring commander,

Marching HLC on endeavour after endeavour;

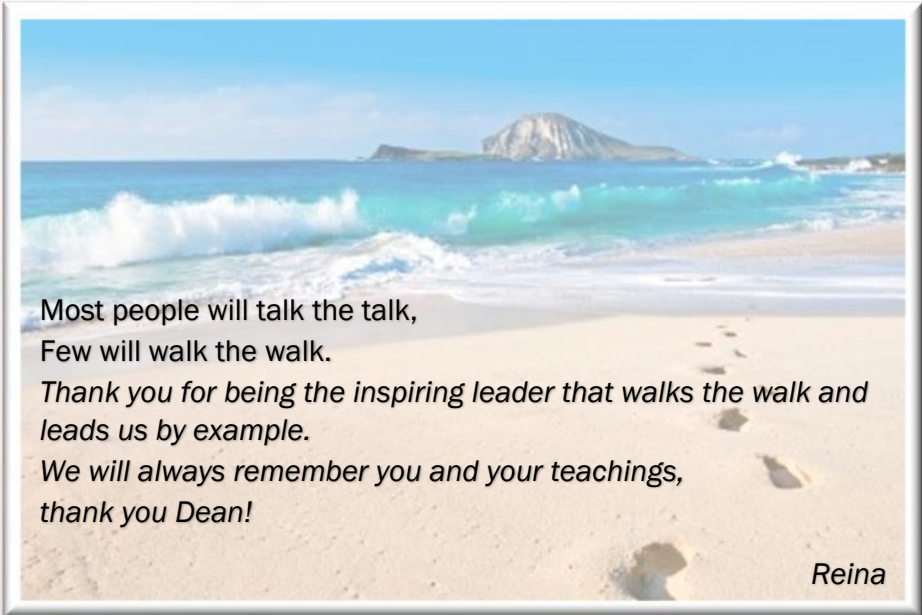
Evolving through transformations in the past decade,

Resilience, you have instilled in the College;

I personally would like to thank you for your care and leadership,

Charge forward as we will, with your teachings always etched.

With love and gratitude,
You Li



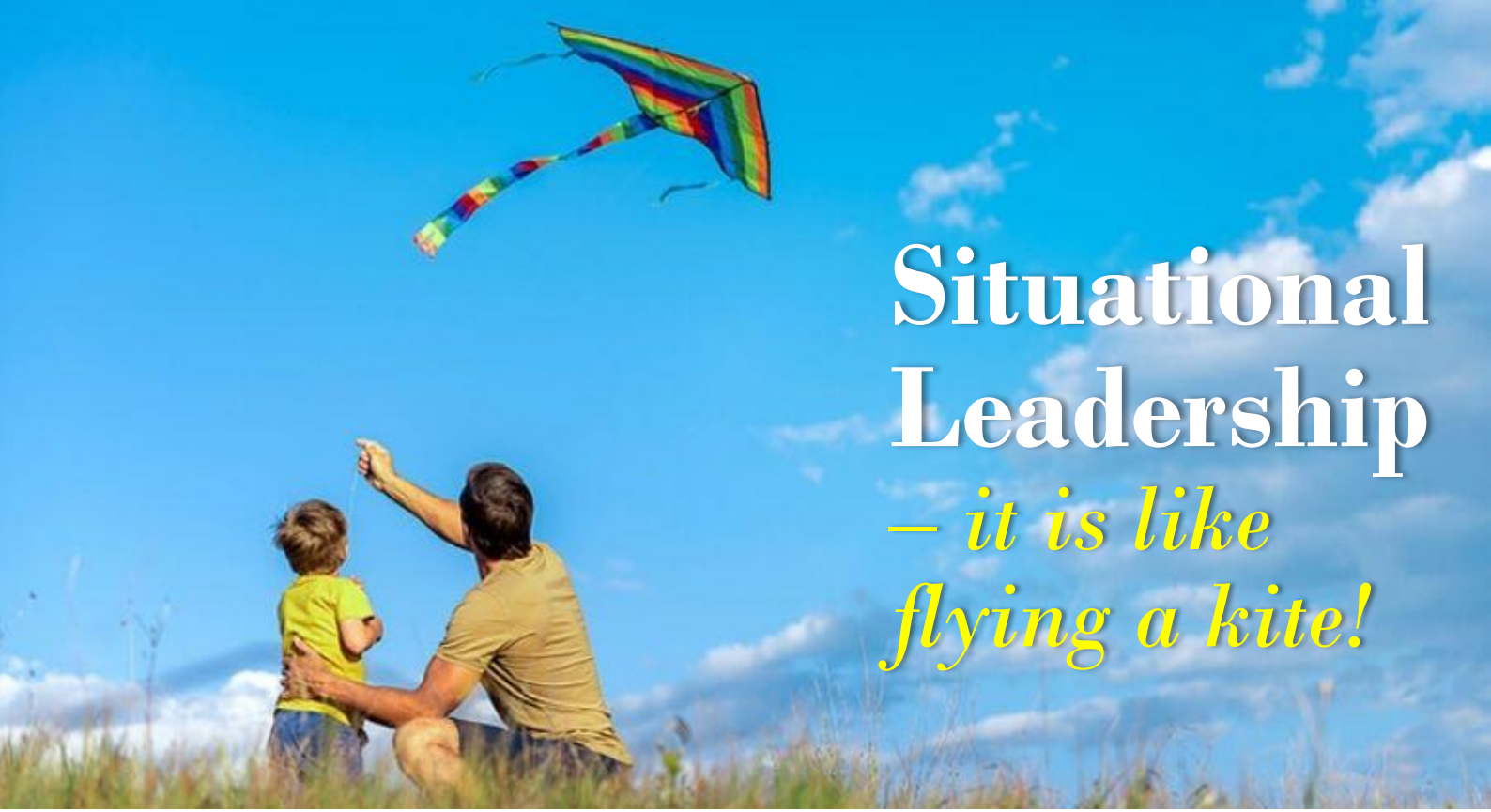
Thank you for being a pillar of strength in HLC over the past 10 years. Your steadfast vision and dedication to taking care of people have enabled HLC to become what it is today.

Jared




frankly,
you're great

Dear Prof Aymeric,
I have heard so much
about your inspiring
leadership and good
work from the HLC team.
I'm sure I missed some
good learning opportunities.
All the best & thank you,
Prof Aymeric!
-maryse



Situational Leadership

– it is like flying a kite!

People often ask, “What is that secret leadership style that will be most successful?”. Is there a single formula that a good leader can maintain through his entire leadership career to be successful? One non-evolving leadership style that can carry us through the ages? Many years later, I learnt about situational leadership, and the many similarities between the practice of situational leadership and kite-flying took me back to my childhood days when my father was teaching me how to fly a kite.

My family stayed in a simple flat in Ang Mo Kio, and we were blessed to have a relatively large park behind our flat. Kite flying was one of our favourite activities. My initial unguided attempts at flying a kite involved running into the wind with the kite flying behind me, hoping it would take off. But the moment I stopped running, the kite would stop flying and crash into the grass, much to my disappointment. It was my father who taught me that there are 4 stages to flying a kite – release, launch, climb and cruise.

Release and Launch

Sense the direction of the wind and catch it. Ask your friend to hold the kite in the direction of the wind, and to throw it upwards into the air. Running with the kite on a short string will also create an apparent wind that will help to lift the kite up.

Climb and Cruise

Once the kite has been released and launched, it will require not just ongoing wind alone to climb. The kite flyer needs to tug on the string to boost the lift, and then release more string almost immediately thereafter so that the kite has more excess string with which to climb higher, until it reaches cruising altitude. Thereafter the kite-flyer can enjoy the flight of the beautiful kite with minimal effort on his



Dr Low Sher Guan Luke
Director, Medical,
Sengkang Community Hospital
Head, COVID-19 Service,
Bright Vision Hospital
Deputy Group Chief Medical
Informatics Officer,
Continuing Care, SingHealth



To be an effective leader, we need to understand that the role of the leader has to evolve according to the situation, going through the stages of teaching, explaining, coaching and delegating.

part, and only occasionally steering the kite away from potential trees and obstacles. This entire process can best be described as a calibrated and graduated effort of letting go so that the kite can climb and continue flying.

Many years later, I realised that similar principles apply for situational leadership. To be an effective leader, we need to understand that the role of the leader has to evolve according to the situation, going through the stages of teaching, explaining, coaching and delegating.

01 Teaching

When the person is still very new to the team and the job, we need to invest a lot of time and effort in telling him what to do, guiding him and directing him, to give him the right knowledge, skills and tools for the job.

02 Explaining

As this person becomes more competent and has the knowledge and skillset to get things done, we need not do so much teaching, but we focus more on “selling”, to explain why it must be done, persuade and get buy-in, and also provide opportunity for clarification. Teaching and explaining can be seen as the “Release and Launch” stages of flying a kite, which is more difficult at the onset, and requires not only understanding of the person’s skills and strengths, but also under what conditions the person will flourish, and finding or creating the right opportunities for the person to succeed.

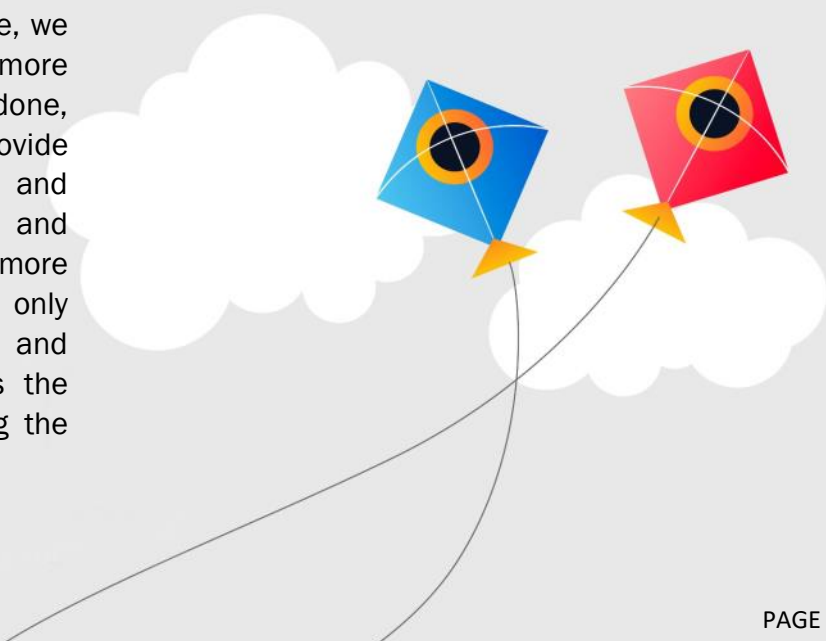
03 Coaching

Once there is buy-in and the group is ready to put their skills to it, the leader can now take on a facilitating and coaching role, encouraging the team to share ideas, so that we can bring out the collective wisdom in the group and help to facilitate decision making. Just as in the climbing stage of kite flying, leaders need to understand when to step in occasionally to offer guidance and help, but then also know how to step back to allow the person and team to take the opportunities further and climb higher.

04 Delegating

This is where some leaders struggle for various reasons, whether it be due to lacking confidence in the team, finding relevance and sometimes even self-preservation. But ultimately, if the leader has taught, explained and coached well, then now is the time to turn over responsibility for decisions and implementation to the team and take on an observing and monitoring role, giving the group time and space to grow further. It takes a very able, confident, and willing leader to do this. Such a leader will find the stairs to the balcony and watch the performance from afar, thus helping the team improve from his big picture perspective.

And such is situational leadership. It is like flying a kite. Can we fly our kites well, holding to the string so that the kites do not lose their way? Can we learn when to pull the string and when to let go?



About the Healthcare Leadership College

DEVELOPING
LEADERS FOR
SINGAPORE
HEALTHCARE



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

Leading Healthcare Team

Advisors

Professor Aymeric Lim
Dean, HLC

Ms Lee Shiao Wei
Director, HLC

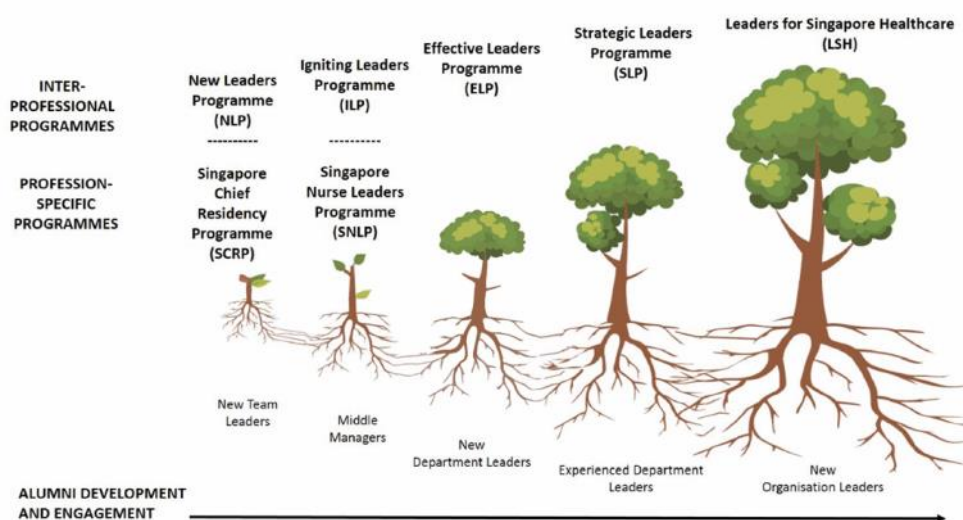
Editorial Team

Mr Dennis Loh
Deputy Director, HLC

Ms Pacillia Ng
Senior Assistant Director, HLC

Ms Reina Goh
Executive, HLC

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)



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?

Programme Manager:
Mr Alfred Cheong

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

Igniting Leaders Programme (ILP)

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 Chia Li Hui

Effective Leaders Programme (ELP)



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:
Ms Goh You Li

Strategic Leaders Programme (SLP)

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:
Mr Jared Koh

Leaders for Singapore Healthcare (LSH)



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.

Programme Manager:
Ms Chu Min Lian

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

Profession-Specific Milestone Programmes

Singapore Chief Residency Programme (SCRCP)



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 (SCRCP) prepares tomorrow's doctors to meet these challenges, promote excellence in the medical education, and advance Singapore's Public Healthcare System.

Programme Manager:
Ms Regine Tan

Singapore Nurse Leaders Programme (SNLP)

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 Maryse Koh

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 Goh You Li**
Ms Chu Min Lian
Ms Nicole Lee



A DIVISION OF
MOH HOLDINGS

A thin, grey, upward-curving arc is positioned below the text "MOH HOLDINGS".