

GROWING



LEADERS

A Collection of Letters to Challenge  
and Inspire Leaders in Healthcare



HEALTHCARE  
LEADERSHIP  
COLLEGE

10th Anniversary Book 2022

It takes ten years to  
**grow a tree,**  
but a hundred years to  
**nurture a talent**

Chinese Proverb

十年树木, 百年树人



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of publishing a collection of letters to young leaders in healthcare was planted when the Healthcare Leadership College (HLC) was considering what would be the most meaningful and appropriate way to celebrate HLC's 10 years of growing leaders.

This anniversary publication, *Growing Leaders*, is our attempt to capture the ethos, shared values, and invaluable leadership experiences of successive generations of leaders in healthcare, from across Singapore's public healthcare agencies, clusters and institutions; and across different healthcare professions. It is our hope that *Growing Leaders* will serve as both an inspiration and challenge for all who serve in healthcare, and as a reminder to not only grow as leaders themselves, but to also grow and nurture future generations of leaders.

The College would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of the following past and present leaders in healthcare who have journeyed with us over the past 10 years:

- Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health
- Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health (2011 - 2021)
- Mr Chan Yeng Kit, Permanent Secretary for Health
- Mr Chan Heng Kee, Permanent Secretary for Health (2016 - 2019)
- Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Permanent Secretary for Health (2012 - 2016)
- Ms Yong Ying-I, Permanent Secretary for Health (2005 - 2012)
- A/Prof Kenneth Mak, Director of Medical Services
- A/Prof Benjamin Ong, Director of Medical Services (2014 - 2020)
- Prof K Satku, Director of Medical Services (2004-2013)

- Prof Philip Choo, Group Chief Executive Officer, National Healthcare Group (NHG)
- Prof Yeoh Khay Guan, Chief Executive, National University Health System (NUHS)
- Prof Ivy Ng, Group Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd (SingHealth)
- Mr Anthony Tan, Managing Director, MOH Holdings
- Mr Goh Aik Guan, Managing Director, MOH Holdings (2007 - 2021)
- Mr Tan Kwang Cheak, Director, Healthcare Leadership College (2015 - 2016)
- Ms Lai Wei Lin, Director, Healthcare Leadership College (2012 - 2015)
- Mr Donald Low, founding Director, Healthcare Leadership College (2012 - 2012)

We also wish to thank the many partners and friends who have helped us in multiple ways: senior leadership and HR partners from MOH, MOHH, HPB, HSA, IHiS, AIC, MOHT, ALPS, and 1FSS; senior leadership and HR partners from the healthcare institutions in NHG, NUHS and SingHealth; friends of HLC from the

public, private and community care sectors; and former HLC team members for their important contributions to HLC.

Last but not least, we are deeply grateful to our founding Dean, Prof Aymeric Lim, who planted the seed of the College in fertile soil, ensured that we grew good roots, and always encouraged us to stretch up and grow towards the sun. The College strives towards many more years of growing leaders.

- Prof Pang Weng Sun, Dean, Healthcare Leadership College
- Ms Lee Shiao Wei, Director, Healthcare Leadership College

HLC team:

Dr Edwin Low, Mr Dennis Loh, Ms Pacillia Ng, Ms Yvonne Soh, Ms Sandra Choong, Mr Jared Koh, Ms Chu Min Lian, Ms Goh You Li, Ms Carol Tang, Ms Chia Li Hui, Ms Maryse Koh, Ms Regine Tan, Ms Jennie Tan, Ms Nicole Lee, Ms Reina Goh.

*April 2022*

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# FOREWORD

## Ms Yong Ying-I



It is my honour and pleasure to pen this foreword for the Healthcare Leadership College's publication on its 10th Anniversary. I am delighted to see how the College has grown and developed in the last 10 years. It has become a critical institution with significant impact on the quality of our healthcare system, nurturing our healthcare leaders at all levels.

When I was Permanent Secretary at Ministry of Health, we already had very good medical care in Singapore. Our clinicians practiced to high standards, supported by high quality training in an international recognised medical school; past generations of senior clinicians had nurtured strong specialist communities. However, we were investing massively to further build

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Leadership is a competency that can be learnt. While a few of us are natural leaders, most of us would benefit from developmental support. We can become better leaders, even if we don't become outstanding ones – and I believe our people deserve leaders who try to improve and do better.

Singapore's healthcare system for example, two new medical schools; nursing undergraduate and PhD programmes; Family Medicine as a specialisation; big expansion in developing allied health professionals. The step-down care hospitals run by VWOs were coming under our wing; this was critical to enabling us to deliver integrated care. We were building up our research capabilities and leveraging technology in a big way – for example, we developed “one patient one (electronic) medical record”, and trialled telemedicine..... The list goes on. The expansion continues to this day.

The massive growth of our healthcare system brought to the fore very quickly the urgent need for leaders to lead this larger and considerably more complex system. The demands of leadership now went beyond being an excellent clinician.

Healthcare leaders, whatever their profession or background, needed new skills to bring together multidisciplinary teams, often beyond one's own institution, to deliver great care and customer service. They had to “think across” and “think ahead”. It was a fairly obvious decision to set up a leadership college at MOHH to support the systematic development of a pipeline of such leaders. Beyond mentoring and skills-building, institutional support includes career management, with deployment opportunities that allow young leaders to lead on the way up, learning and growing in the process. This support might otherwise not be available in the normal course of work.

Leadership is a competency that can be learnt. While a few of us are natural leaders, most of us would benefit from developmental support.

We can become better leaders, even if we don't become outstanding ones – and I believe our people deserve leaders who try to improve and do better. Earlier in my own leadership journey, I had been inspired by a book, “Hope is not a Method” by General Gordon Sullivan, about the US Army's post-Cold War transformation efforts to enter the Information Age. In it, Sullivan described in inspiring detail the US Army's efforts to rebuild its leadership ethos, values, culture, and its leadership pipeline, after the debacle of the Vietnam War. It highlighted the importance of leaders having moral courage anchored on values, which Prof Aymeric Lim discusses in his article. It also brought home to me the key philosophy that our healthcare leaders must lead collectively. Collective leadership includes collaborating closely with other leaders from a wide range of backgrounds, looking out for and accommodating each other, knowing when to lead and when to step back and let others more suited to the specific task take the lead. The College is an important platform to nurture this shared purpose, ethos and values.

I congratulate Prof Aymeric Lim, founding Dean of the College for its first decade, as well as his management team, for doing an outstanding job. They have not only built up the College's suite of

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 closely with other leaders  
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 specific task take the lead.**

high-quality programmes, but they have done this at a rapid pace and engaged the community on the journey, and they have visibly strengthened the pipeline of emerging leaders at various levels. There are many sayings about “planting oak trees for the future”. It's about building for the future: “from tiny acorns, mighty oaks grow”. But oak trees take time to grow, so the parties that sow the seeds do it for the benefit of those who come after them, often without themselves enjoying the fruits of their efforts. The Healthcare Leadership College's

emblem is aptly a tree. I count myself as specially privileged to be able to see the fruits from the seed planted a decade ago. This makes all our efforts purposeful and fulfilling.

Let me once again congratulate the Healthcare Leadership College on its 10th anniversary and a very successful first decade. The 10th anniversary publication is a wonderful collection of the “Letters to Young Leaders” reproduced from its quarterly newsletters over the decade. They contain a wealth of insights from our senior leaders as they reflected on their own journeys as professionals and as leaders. Through it, the power of the shared ethos, values and shared purpose shines strongly. I believe this collective power has helped lead our healthcare system successfully through the huge challenge of tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. It will likewise be crucial to tackle the increasingly complex challenges our healthcare system will face.

I wish Prof Pang Weng Sun all the very best as he takes over the helm at the College. I am confident that under his able leadership, the College will go on to new heights in the next decade of its growth. Let me wish the College continued success, and to our stakeholders and healthcare community, happy reading.



**MS YONG YING-I**  
 Chairman,  
 Central Provident Fund Board

*Former Permanent Secretary (Health)  
 (2005-2012),  
 Ministry of Health*

A career civil servant, Ms Yong Ying-I has helmed a number of ministries and public sector agencies in her career, including being Permanent Secretary at Manpower, Public Service Division (PMO), and National Research Foundation. She was Permanent Secretary (Health) from 2005 to 2012, where she worked on restructuring of the governance of the national healthcare system, including the establishment of our academic medical centres and development of our aged care & step-down care sectors. She helped build up our biomedical sciences capabilities and invested in technology usage. She strongly championed professional healthcare manpower development, including the development of leaders. Ms Yong last served as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications & Information.

“

Values define the organisation; and just like the Ten Commandments were inscribed on stone for posterity, so too must values be made visible for all to see across time.

*Prof Aymeric Lim*

Deep roots  
are not reached  
by the frost

J.R.R. Tolkien



A letter written by  
**Professor  
 Aymeric Lim**

“  
 True  
 compassion  
 is altruistic,  
 it demands  
 excellence  
 and is  
 expressed in  
 service.”



The symbol of the Healthcare Leadership College (HLC) is a tree. Good trees have solid roots; they have strong trunks with sturdy branches and healthy leaves, and they bear good fruit. Trees maintain a deep bond with each, and every one of us, no matter the country, conviction or culture. And this is exactly why the tree – from sapling to a mighty giant – is emblematic of the HLC.

More than a decade ago, it was noted that healthcare in Singapore had been growing the wrong way. The focus had shifted from treating the patient to treating the disease. Altruism was withering, and this trend needed to be stemmed. Ms. Yong Ying-I, the then-

Permanent Secretary of Health at that time, set up the HLC in 2012 to rejuvenate the true ideals of our mission, and to reinject humanism into our profession and healthcare in general.

### Values

The very *first mission* of HLC was to re-establish the importance, and visibility of **values**, which form the core and the roots of our HLC. Core values are similar across all our public institutions. They are built around compassion. True compassion is altruistic, it demands excellence and is expressed through service. Any organisation that holds to this for its own staff, will display the same compassion for its patients.

“  
 You must have moral courage.  
 Moral courage is a much rarer  
 thing than physical courage. Moral  
 courage means you do what you  
 think is right without bothering  
 very much what happens to you  
 when you are doing it.”

Values define the organisation; just like the ten commandments were inscribed on stone for posterity, so too must values be made visible for all to see across time. The problem with values though, is that they must be held to even when it is hard. This requires an inner strength of conviction called moral courage. Moral courage is the primary enabler of our values; it is a sine qua non for Leadership.

### Moral Courage

Perhaps there is no better description of moral courage than that of General William Slim's (1891 – 1970). William Slim, described by Admiral Louis Mountbatten as the finest general World War II produced, said of moral courage:

“You must have moral courage. Moral courage is a *much rarer* thing than physical courage. Moral courage means you do what you think is right without bothering very much what happens to you when you are doing it.”

This description is perfect for healthcare.

**Moral courage** mandates that doing the right thing takes primacy over doing things right. There will be times when doing the right thing may come at some





personal cost, and the choices will be made by an authentic leader's inner moral compass.

### Sources Of Leadership Wisdom

There is a paradox in healthcare. While failures of leadership have severe consequences for patients, the consequences for the leaders themselves are usually not direct, nor immediate.

In business, the consequences for leaders are direct. The business will go bankrupt and leaders will be replaced. In the military, the immediate consequences of failure are defeat and death for the soldiers and often for the commanders.

I therefore think that it is the military leadership literature that is truly tried and tested, and the most valid. It can and should be applied to healthcare, and there is no better example than the COVID-19 pandemic. During these past two years, our intelligence was always changing, our plans always appeared to be less than perfect and upon execution of these plans, the reality looked very different.

One of the greatest military classics is the multi-volume treatise *On War*, by Carl von Clausewitz

(1780-1831), a Prussian general. He wrote these volumes after Prussia had been crushed by France in the Napoleonic wars. He said of plans, intelligence, and reality:

"Many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more, are false, and most are uncertain," "The enemy of a good plan is the dream of a perfect plan," and "Everything takes a different shape when we pass from abstractions to reality."



### Policies

If values are the roots of our tree, then the trunk is formed by sound healthcare **policies**. Strong national values and philosophies lead to good policies. They form the backbone of any healthcare system. If they are weak the system will crumble.

I think that the central policy, that of *accountability* on the part of patients as well as the system, was established by Lee Kuan Yew. He stated in his memoirs that:

"The ideal of free medical services collided against the reality of human behavior, certainly in Singapore. My first lesson came from government clinics and hospitals. When doctors prescribed free antibiotics, patients took their tablets or capsules for two days, did not feel better, and threw away the balance. They then consulted private doctors, paid for their antibiotics, completed the course, and recovered. I decided to impose a charge of fifty cents for each attendance at outpatient dispensaries."

Our COVID-19 response and policies were values-driven. The first duty of the government is to protect its people, and this is what Singapore

has done. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong stated in 2020 : "We will keep on doing our utmost to protect every Singaporean from COVID-19. Many people have been working tirelessly for the past two months. Our nurses and doctors, our contact tracers and healthcare staff. We thank them all for their efforts and sacrifices. Now we are all enlisted to join them on the frontline."

He demonstrated the role of humanism in medicine when he promised to deliver healthcare to foreign workers in the country:

"If any of their family members watch my video, let me say this to them: 'We appreciate the work and contributions of your sons, fathers, husbands in Singapore. We feel responsible for their well-being. We will do our best to take care of their health, livelihood and welfare here, and to let them go home, safe and sound, to you.'"

If we as a nation had not chosen this course of action for our migrant workers, there would have been damaging effects to our national character.



## Execution

Policies have little use unless they are paired with well-articulated and well executed strategies; these branch out from values-based core policy. Neither articulation nor **execution**, is easy. They require a simplicity of intent, a clarity of logic, and diligent determination. Stephen Bungay puts it very well:

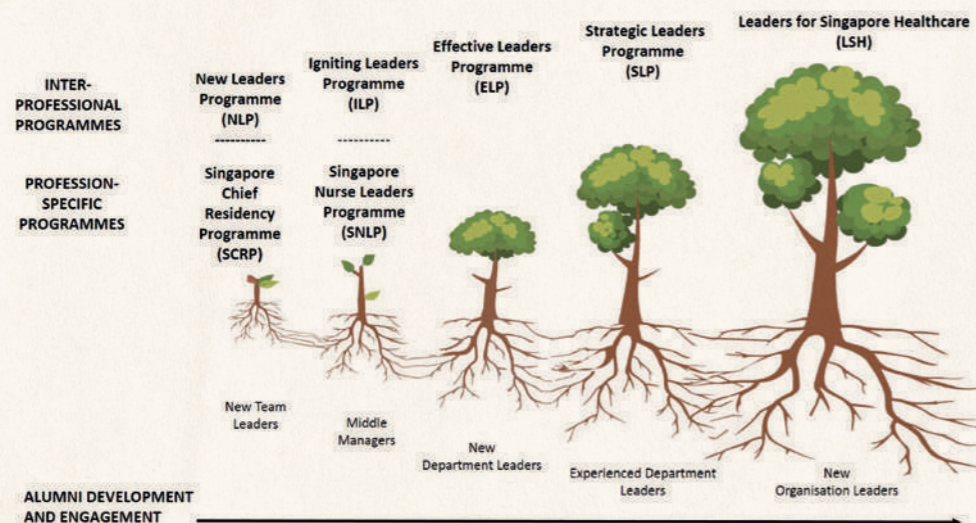
“Having worked out what matters most now, pass the message on to others and give them responsibility for carrying out their part in the plan. Keep it simple. Don’t tell people what to do and how to do it. Instead, be as clear as you can about your intentions. Say what you want people to achieve and, above all, tell them *why*. Then ask them to tell you what they are going to do as a result.”

Programmes at the HLC are designed on three interlacing principles:

1. Thinking up — having a sound understanding of policy.
2. Thinking across — across our institutions and the professions.
3. Thinking ahead — planning the future of healthcare delivery.

Three strategic manoeuvres were used in planning the future of healthcare in Singapore:

1. Rationalising healthcare into three clusters - combining the dual juxtaposed strengths of consolidation and competition.



2. Developing the “Three Beyonds” - Beyond Healthcare to Health; Beyond Hospital to Community; Beyond Quality to Value.
3. A mindset recalibration from tribal-think to a systems-based approach of thinking for the good of the patient, the good of the healthcare system, and the good of the nation.

We need to remember there is no greater obstacle to successful execution than micromanagement.

## Outcomes

The fruits are the *raison d’être* of the HLC. These are the excellent men and women that HLC has developed: leaders that execute well-laid and well-conceived plans, based on values-driven policy, and the moral courage to do the right thing. The leaders we produce at HLC work for the good of all patients, their families, and both society and nation. These leaders understand that the enemy may be the disease, but the ones that need the healthcare are the patient and the nation. After all,

下医医病, 中医医人, 上医医国

The mediocre doctor treats the disease, the common doctor treats the patient, and the best doctors solve the problems of the country.



**PROFESSOR AYMERIC LIM**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
National University Hospital

Professor, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery,  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine,  
National University of Singapore

Senior Consultant, Department of Hand  
& Reconstructive Microsurgery,  
National University Hospital

Professor Aymeric Lim is the Chief Executive Officer of the National University Hospital (NUH), a 1,250 bed tertiary care hospital of the National University Health System (NUHS), and principal teaching hospital of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUSMed) and the NUS Faculty of Dentistry. Before serving as the NUH CEO, Prof Lim held various leadership roles at both institutional and national levels, including Group Chairman, Medical Board of the NUHS, Group Chief Human Resource Officer, Chairman, Medical Board, NUH. In 2012, Prof Lim was appointed founding Dean of the Healthcare Leadership College, MOH Holdings, a position he held till 2021.

For his contributions to the Singapore healthcare sector, he was conferred the Public Administration Medal (Silver) at the National Day Awards in 2018. Prior to this, in 2012, he received the Commendation Medal (Military) at the National Day Awards.

With almost 30 years of experience, Prof Lim is an internationally recognised hand and reconstructive microsurgeon, subspecialising in peripheral nerve surgery, brachial plexus, stroke and thoracic outlet syndrome.

A letter written by  
**Professor**  
**Chua Hong Choon**

“  
 Be true to yourself. Whom  
 you are as a person, reflects  
 whom you are as a leader.”



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. Whom You Are As A Person,  
 Reflects Whom 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.

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 We can all exercise  
 leadership wherever  
 we are - you need not  
 necessarily be at a senior  
 position to do that.”

**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 but be more proactive in tapping their potential, creating work opportunities for them at the workplace. This may include customising 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 or 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

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...be courageous to make the right changes to improve the current systems/processes.

...offer the leadership to lead, implement the change and this includes taking responsibility, accountability for the changes you are proposing.



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.

“  
When the way ahead is uncertain and unclear, the leadership principles which I hold dearest, have always guided me well.



**PROFESSOR CHUA HONG CHOON**  
*Chief Executive Officer,  
KTPH & Yishun Health*

*Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer,  
(Strategy & Transformation)  
National Healthcare Group*

Professor Chua Hong Choon is Chief Executive Officer of Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) & Yishun Health, and Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Strategy & Transformation), National Healthcare Group (NHG) in Singapore.

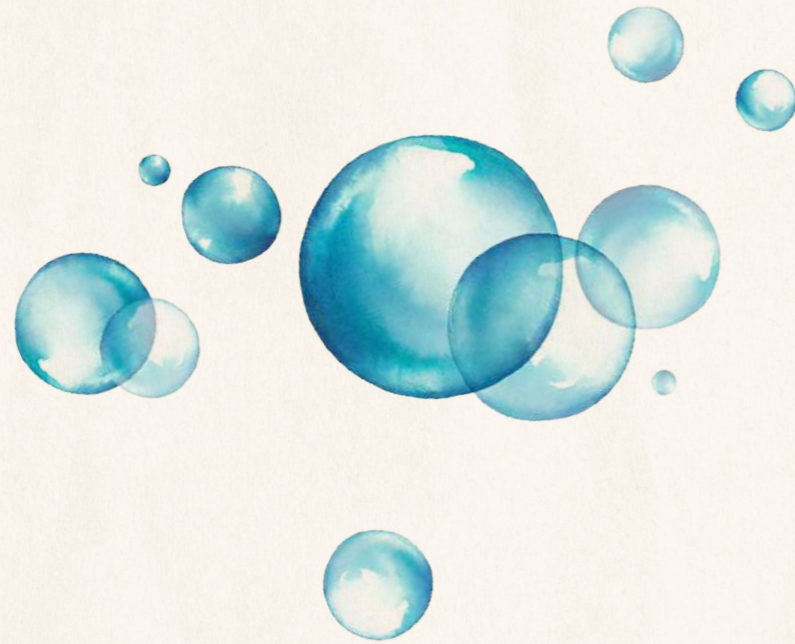
A psychiatrist by training, Prof Chua was the Chairman of the national Residency Advisory Committee (RAC) for Psychiatry from 2011 to 2021, and he is currently Adjunct Professor at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine NTU and Adjunct Associate Professor at Yong Loo Lin Medical School NUS.

Prof Chua has keen interests in the fields of public health, psychiatric epidemiology, depression & anxiety, and quality & safety in health care. Prof Chua was also the first Patient Safety Officer at the Institute of Mental Health, where he developed programs and initiatives to improve clinical quality and safeguard patient safety at IMH.

Prof Chua, who was president of the Singapore Psychiatric Association from 2005 to 2008, is active in the field of mental health education and is a frequently invited lecturer at regional and international conferences, in psychiatry as well as in quality improvement & safety in health care.



A letter written by  
**Doctor  
 David Ng**



“

We are each shaped by our values, personality, upbringing, education and life experiences. They mould and develop us into the unique individuals that we are.

We are each shaped by our values, personality, upbringing, education and life experiences. They mould and develop us into the unique individuals that we are. Similarly, my leadership journey has been shaped both by my job as a clinician as well as my other life experiences - these have influenced my leadership style and how I make decisions.

**Step Up When The Opportunity Knocks On Your Door**

In the course of your journey, you may encounter crossroads where you are not sure which direction to take. Sometimes, you may be offered an opportunity to take on a bigger role but you are uncertain if you can rise up to the challenge.

I have been at these crossroads many times; however, I realised that once you are clear about your focus and priorities, you can view these as opportunities given to you to grow and stretch yourself further. The transition period is not easy as fear, uncertainty will step in, however, do not give up. Strive on, learn new skills, get support from your colleagues and team, and make the necessary adjustments to maintain balance in your life. You will feel the satisfaction and the accomplishment when you see the fruition of your hard work.

“

Strive on, learn new skills, get support from your colleagues and team, and make the necessary adjustments to maintain balance in your life.

**Be Patient, There Is A Timing And Season For Everything**

All of us have an innate desire to do good and when we see something that is not right with the systems or processes; we may get frustrated and look for ways to change them for the better. At times, we also find that changes are fast in other industries but when it comes to healthcare, there seems to be a slowness or even bottlenecks in accepting and implementing good changes.

I have learned over the years that there is a season and timing for everything. Let me give you two examples - First, over the past decades, the focus of healthcare seemed to be in Acute Care and



Specialty Care. However, with the strategic thrust of the Three Beyonds and Population Health, Primary Care has been increasingly given greater focus in recent years. As a Polyclinic leader, I am happy and excited to see this shift of focus and look forward to transforming healthcare with primary and preventative care. Another noticeable example is Telemedicine. During pre-COVID-19 times, it was not well received as people preferred to see their doctors face-to-face. However, the last two years of COVID-19 has resulted in increasing clinician and patient acceptance of Telehealth modalities.

“  
**Be patient and don't give up. Rather, turn your eagerness for change into positive energy...**

**Bide your time and strike when the timing is right.**

Therefore, we need to have the wisdom to recognise that the timing may not be right for some of these changes that we feel passionately about and eager to push. Be patient and don't give up. Rather, turn your eagerness for change into positive energy. You can use the waiting time to conduct more research or make small, incremental changes within your sphere of influence, which will bring you closer to your desired goal. Bide your time and strike when the timing is right.

#### **Think Up And See The Larger Mission**

There may be times when your supervisors assign you tasks and projects that you do not agree with or see the rationale for. When such things happen, many of us find ourselves in a position of internal conflict in how to disseminate and convey these tasks to our subordinates. Some of us get angry and upset, others may become negative and simply pass down the tasks mechanically.

In such situations, try to put yourself in your boss' shoes and think of what you could have done if you were them; look at the considerations that they are facing and seek to understand the higher strategic

“  
**... each life experience and encounter is an opportunity for self reflection and self discovery. Through the process, you grow both as a person and as a leader.**

mission that your boss and your boss' boss are trying to achieve. Seek understanding on the tasks and your role so that you can appreciate it better. You may not see the big picture at first but once you clarify, seek understanding, the alignment will be clearer. In turn, you can then better communicate the larger mission to your colleagues.

Ultimately, each life experience and encounter is an opportunity for self reflection and self discovery. Through the process, you grow both as a person and as a leader. In my journey, I have discovered strengths and talents which I never thought I had!



**DR DAVID NG**  
 Chief Executive Officer,  
 SingHealth Polyclinics

Dr David Ng is a Family Physician by training and currently serves as the CEO of SingHealth Polyclinics. Through that role, he oversees the clinical, educational and research and corporate aspects of SHP in her drive towards excellent primary care. Throughout this leadership journey, his core belief has been in the inherent value of people and improving lives for a stronger nation.

At the same time, I recognise blindspots and areas to work on. All of us are works in progress. I found establishing a rhythm of rest and reflection helpful to stay aligned to my inner compass and in harmony with myself. Let me encourage you to step forth and discover your own rhythm and season. Take time to enjoy the journey and seasons of your life.



“

I hope that you will all likewise find a strong purpose in your leadership journey and keep focused on your impact as a leader, in whatever capacity you are serving.

*Prof Ivy Ng*



Turn your face  
to the **sun**, and  
the shadows  
**fall** behind you

Maori Proverb

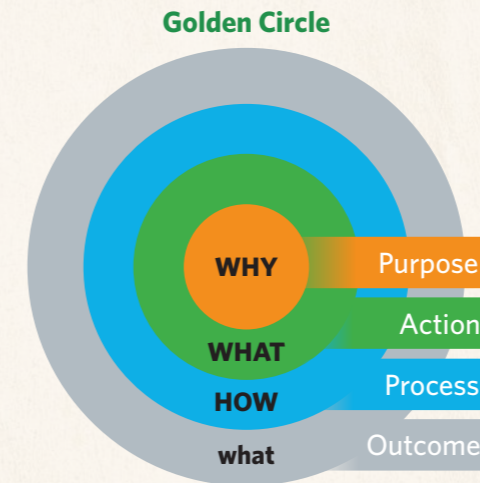


A letter written by  
**A/Professor**  
**Tan Boon Yeow**

“

I ask myself the **WHYs** (purpose) of my leadership. Next, I seek to know the **WHATs** (means) that need to be done in order to accomplish the **WHYs**. Last but not least, I apply the **HOWs** (methods) in order to accomplish the **WHATs**.

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why do I want to be a leader?”. What is your ultimate goal as a leader? What motivates and keeps you going as a leader? Perhaps many of you, like me, came into leadership roles quite “accidentally” and you did not aspire to be one. Yet, over the years, I have come to realise that it is vital to ask myself these crucial questions as a leader especially when I encounter challenges.



I find the ‘Golden Circle’ concept by Simon Sinek, a well-known author and speaker, a useful one to help frame the essentials in each of our leadership journeys. First, I ask myself the **WHYs** (purpose) of my leadership. Next, I seek to know the **WHATs** (means) that need to be done in order to accomplish the **WHYs**. Last but not least, I apply the **HOWs** (methods) in order to accomplish the **WHATs**.

### Start With The **WHY** (Purpose)

I ask myself the ‘**WHY**’ question when I am asked to lead. I also consider if I am the best person for the job. In my opinion, I think we do not ask the ‘**WHY**’ question enough. This is the first and probably the most important starting point in our leadership journey. If we are not clear about this,

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I urge you to pause and ask yourself the hard question of ‘**WHY**’ in your current leadership role.

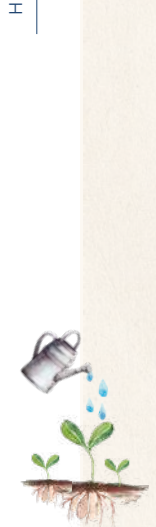
our foundation would likely be shaken when the going gets tough, and we will struggle to chart the way forward (as commander-in-charge) and hold the team together.

I urge you to pause and ask yourself the hard question of ‘**WHY**’ in your current leadership role.

### Know The **WHATs** (Means)

Once we are clear with the ‘**WHYs**’ of our leadership role, we need to seek out the ‘**WHATs**’ or the actions needed.

It may help to craft a purpose statement. My personal leadership purpose statement is: “To inspire, build, lead; and in so doing, to live out my Christian faith”. The **WHAT** here includes the need to build the team and create a conducive environment for staff to grow, both professionally





and personally. I also seek to inspire them to act and lead them to collectively accomplish the mission/goals of the organisation.

I find the following 'WHATs' essential in my leadership journey:

### A. Embracing A Growth Instead Of A Fixed Mindset

Being open to new ways and solutions to challenges. The leader with a growth mindset is unfazed by challenges and failures, but sees them as opportunities for growth.

### B. Being Resilient

Being receptive to change and inspire the change process within the organisation. This is no easy feat and is oftentimes met with much reluctance and resistance. Leaders need to be hardy yet patient, in order to help their people and the organisation thrive in altered circumstances.

### C. Having Both Insight And Foresight

Possessing the ability to have a forward view and leverage on insights and prior knowledge



to anticipate the future so as to chart the best way forward for the team and the organisation.

## Apply The HOWs (Methods)

In order to realise the 'WHATs', we need to take specific steps. The following 'HOWs' build on the 'WHATs' listed above.

### A. Applying the PSC (Perceive, Sense-Make, Choreograph) Model

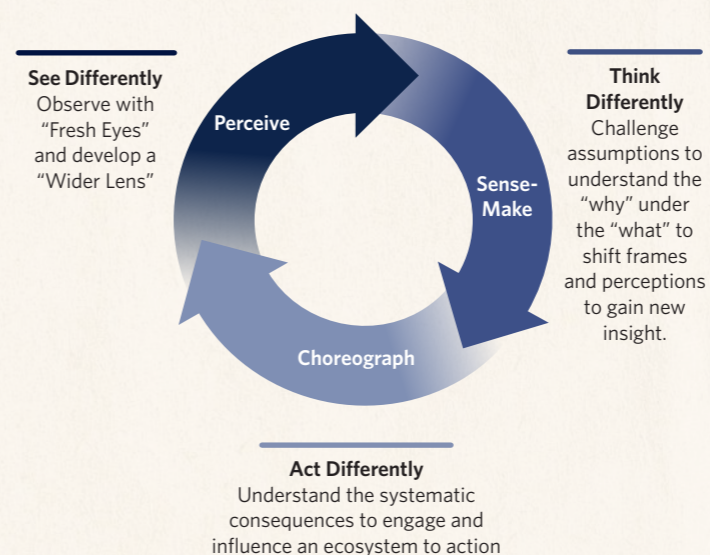
Honing the ability to perceive or to look at issues with new (and wider) lenses. Having seen a different perspective to the problem, one then sets out to sense-make or think differently. This includes challenging the assumptions and understanding the WHYs and WHATs to reframe and gain fresh insights. Finally, having perceived and sense-made, we are then required to choreograph, which is to act differently by engaging and influencing the ecosystem to action.

### B. Zooming In And Zooming Out

I have also observed that many clinicians are good at dealing with issues at the micro or

individual level largely because we have been trained that way. To be an effective leader, one needs to acquire the ability to look at micro-, meso- and macro-level issues by zooming out to see the bigger picture. This is particularly helpful as we address current issues (insight matters), and also as we plan for the future (foresight) to provide anticipatory care.

Finally, it is imperative as leaders to be aware of the effects of our leadership by soliciting feedback on our leadership. This will help us hone our leadership abilities by fine-tuning our 'WHATs' and 'HOWs' so as to achieve our purpose or the 'WHYs' of our leadership.



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TAN BOON YEOW**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Senior Consultant,  
St Luke's Hospital

Associate Professor Tan's experience spans from acute to community-based hospital care and primary care. His passion lies in the integration of care across the diverse settings that patients will traverse during their care journey. His leadership and academic appointments include Chief Executive Officer and Senior Consultant Physician of St Luke's Hospital; Chairman, Chapter of Family Medicine, Academy of Medicine Singapore and Adjunct Associate Professor at both National University of Singapore and Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine & Duke-NUS Medical School. He was also awarded the MOH National Outstanding Clinician Educator Award in 2019 under the National Medical Excellence Awards (NMEA) and The Albert & Mary Lim's Award 2019.

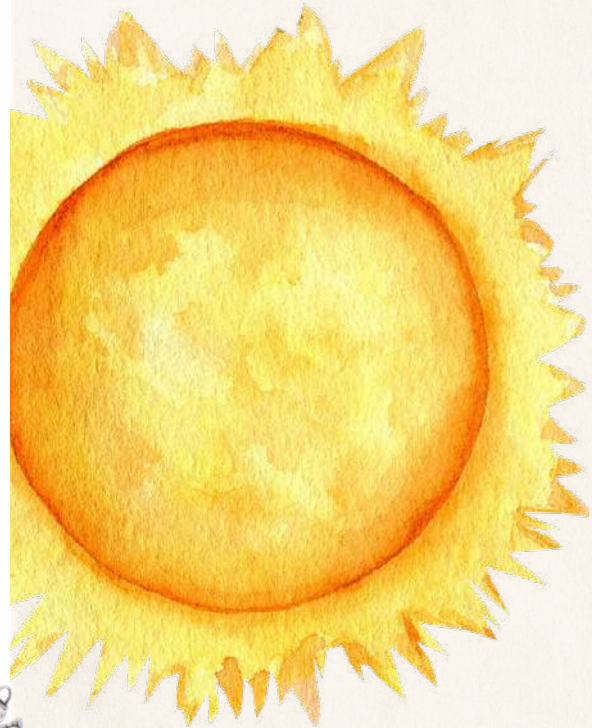


A letter written by  
**Professor  
 Ivy Ng**

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You can help about 50 patients a day by being a good doctor, but you can have a far larger impact on more than 1,500 patients a day if you are the Head of Paediatrics and run the department well.

At a recent dialogue session, as I interacted with some young leaders, many of them told me that they had not thought of taking on leadership roles when they chose to work in healthcare. They wondered how they could continue to stay motivated and dedicated amidst the challenges ahead.



These young leaders that I spoke to reminded me of myself, many years ago, as I stood on the cusp of taking up a leadership role. As I look back at my journey, let me share with you, what has given me energy to continue to contribute in public healthcare for so many years, and some invaluable lessons that I have learnt over the years.

I first became a doctor because I found so much joy and meaning in helping patients get better. However, one day I was asked to be the Head of Paediatrics. It was a big challenge to me as Paediatrics is a large department in KKH - and I struggled with the decision as it would take up my clinical time, which I love.

What gave me resolve at the time was what my mentor said to me: “You can help about 50 patients a day by being a good doctor, but you can have a far larger impact on more than 1,500 patients a day if you are the Head of Paediatrics and run the department well.” That struck a chord in my heart and has become my central focus and guiding philosophy through these years: keeping focused on the larger impact that I can make as a leader. From patient care, to Department Head, to Hospital CMB then CEO, and now at the Cluster level. I hope that you will all likewise find a strong

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What must not change is your passion to serve and help patients.

purpose in your leadership journey and keep focused on your impact as a leader, in whatever capacity you are serving. What must not change is your passion to serve and help patients.

### Scaling The Brave New World

In healthcare, things are moving so fast. It is a complex new world as many of you have said. How do you then prepare yourself for the future? For myself, I have kept these four lessons close to my heart:

#### **Be The Best That You Can Be**

Keep striving to be the best at what you are doing and be committed to learn as much as you can from all sources, especially those you work with.



### Share And Work Across Boundaries

You have to be unashamed to learn and be open to sharing. The key lies not in the number of clusters but the mindset. There are many best practices that SingHealth can learn from NHG and NUHS and I hope vice versa. You do not need to reinvent the wheel, you can learn from others and contextualise to your needs. This then frees time for fresh innovations and accelerates our progress.

### Be Discontented Constructively

You must always be discontented with the way things are. You need to question the basic principles of what we set out to do. Our real competitors are the diseases we struggle with and we should not be afraid to acknowledge that there are gaps in the system. This also means that there are many opportunities to make things better in healthcare. Thus, you need to press on to ask: Why not? Why can't we do it? Keep asking the questions and thinking about how to bridge the gaps and address deficiencies.



“

**Keep striving to be the best at what you are doing and be committed to learn as much as you can from all sources, especially those you work with.**



### Be Resilient And Adaptable

In the complex world today, it is inevitable that change is the only constant. You need to prepare yourself to be adaptable and be ready to face adversity. Take charge and reframe your perspectives to see new possibilities and focus on the most critical issues that you want to see changes.

As a final word, I wish you the best in finding the purpose in what you do. While the road ahead seems uphill, do not lose heart. Keep focused on your purpose, persist on, be tenacious about the right goals, and you will be able to make the right decisions in this journey. Let us embrace that we are one public healthcare, and together, we can progress towards a ONE healthcare system that meets the needs of the population we serve.

“

**In the complex world today, it is inevitable that change is the only constant. You need to prepare yourself to be adaptable and be ready to face adversity. Take charge and reframe your perspectives to see new possibilities and focus on the most critical issues that you want to see changes.**



**PROFESSOR IVY NG**  
Group Chief Executive Officer,  
Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd

Professor Ivy Ng is Group Chief Executive Officer of the largest healthcare cluster and academic health system in Singapore, with more than 30,000 staff in 11 institutions, comprising 4 Hospitals, 5 National Specialty Centres (Cancer, Heart, Eye, Dental and Neurological Diseases), 3 Community Hospitals and 9 primary care clinics, delivering the full spectrum of clinical services.

She was conferred many prestigious national awards, including the Public Administration Medal (Gold) 2011, NTUC May Day Medal of Commendation (Gold) Award 2020, NUS University Outstanding Service Award 2020 and President's Science & Technology Medal 2021. She is Chair of the KKH Fund Committee and member of the Boards of SingHealth Fund Limited, Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore Management University, Integrated Health Information Systems, the National Medical Research Council and the Human Health and Potential Committee.

She graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS). She is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (FRCP, Edinburgh), Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (FRCPC, London) and Academy of Medicine, Singapore (FAMS). She is Clinical Professor, Duke-NUS Medical School and NUS School of Medicine.



A letter written by

Ms

# Margaret Lee



I first joined the public healthcare sector as a young Finance executive with NUH 25 years ago. I did not know then what life would bring, but I was determined to give my best with whatever I have and to keep an open and inquisitive mind. Just as I had been, you are now at a stage in your lives where learning opportunities are aplenty.

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**I did not know then what life would bring, but I was determined to give my best with whatever I have and to keep an open and inquisitive mind.**



## Never Stop Learning

My years with NUH had built a strong foundation in my understanding of how a hospital operates inside out. After 12 good years there, I made the decision to take a 10-month break from work to spend time with my four young children. And when I was ready to return to the workforce, I was given the opportunity to join SingHealth's Corporate Planning team. It was a privilege to be able to work in the different healthcare clusters.

Even as all three of our clusters are unique in their own ways, I see our public healthcare sector as one big family where everyone can contribute differently to the many facets of the industry. Being able to work in all three clusters, the learning experience was invaluable.

Looking back, I cherished my decision to take time-off from work for that 10 months, as my family grew closer and I was able to be there to witness many key events in my children's lives. Success in life is not only about achieving career accomplishments, but also about being happy and fulfilled in your personal life while enjoying the work that you do.

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**Success in life is not only about achieving career accomplishments, but also about being happy and fulfilled in your personal life while enjoying the work that you do.**

It does require some sacrifice to take a different pathway, but it is our personal responsibility to make a meaningful assessment and decide what works best for us at different stages of our lives. It was with this mindset that I was able to grow and develop my career.

Additionally, with leadership roles in healthcare typically filled by clinical professionals, it was the opportunities presented to me, and leaders who believed in me that had led me from an



Ms Margaret Lee

administrative role in Finance to now CEO of SingHealth Community Hospitals. Five years into this role, I am quite confident to say that you do not need to be a professional expert to run an organisation, but you have to be an expert leader and believe in yourself.

Many times, you do not know what you can achieve until you are in a position that stretches and tests your potential. The journey may be full of challenges but that's where you must learn and grow.

### Building A Team

A good leader is backed by a strong and loyal team. Start by engaging your immediate team and let everyone's voices be heard, especially when it comes to making decisions. Secondly, let there be an element of fun - when we inject soft elements and be a bit informal, people feel less inhibited and tend to speak up more. It is also important how you listen and respond to what people say. Suspend judgment, even if there is an avalanche of challenges ahead. We have to focus on building teams and hear our people out. To get

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**Many times, you do not know what you can achieve until you are in a position that stretches and tests your potential. The journey may be full of challenges but that's where you must learn and grow.**



your team fully on board with you, it is important to facilitate conversations in a way that is respectful yet clear with your directions. A committed team solves problems together and follows their leaders wholeheartedly towards a common goal.

### Always Be Authentic

People can tell whether a leader is being genuine. For example, you may sometimes be in possession of information that is confidential and you are not able to share it with your staff at the beginning. Be honest with your team that you are not able to share with them until the timing is right. Express empathy by listening to your team and understanding their thought processes. In doing so, they will feel more involved and invested in the cause.

### Having The Right Mindset

Healthcare is a high-touch business with a high level of complexity. Compassion and empathy are key in the nature of this business, and healthcare leaders will need high EQ in caring for patients and staff.

“

**Express empathy by listening to your team and understanding their thought processes. In doing so, they will feel more involved and invested in the cause.**

When in healthcare, this EQ equates to having deeper realisation and acceptance that not all care ought to be delivered in the acute setting. We need the mindset that resources must be used correctly. This will allow us to propel the Population Health plan forward and look at health outcomes of our patients beyond the hospital walls.

Patients can be looked after in the community, by the community, away from acute settings. It is also important to have a cluster-wide mindset and to be open to collaborations that can optimise our resources and reduce duplication.



“

Healthcare is a high-touch business with a high level of complexity. Compassion and empathy are key in the nature of this business, and healthcare leaders will need high EQ in caring for patients and staff.

### Finding Your Purpose

Your resilience will come from setting goals for something beyond yourself. For me, I give my best at work every day and work hard for my family, as I strive to be a good role model for my four children. When the motivation is not just about me, it shifts the focus and I look at my work with that focus.

A long and exciting road awaits you. Optimism, passion and doses of reality will provide you the fuel you need to make positive changes in yourself, your team and your department as you journey on ahead! I wish you all the best.

“

Your resilience will come from setting goals for something beyond yourself. For me, I give my best at work every day and work hard for my family, as I strive to be a good role model for my four children. When the motivation is not just about me, it shifts the focus and I look at my work with that focus.



**MS MARGARET LEE**  
Deputy Group Chief Financial Officer  
(Regional Health System & Strategic Finance),  
Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd

Chief Executive Officer,  
SingHealth Community Hospitals

Ms Lee has more than 25 years' experience in the Singapore public healthcare system, with expertise in healthcare management, finance and corporate services development.

As the Chief Executive Officer of SingHealth Community Hospitals, Ms Lee stewards the organisation's efforts in establishing itself as a leading provider of rehabilitation, sub-acute and palliative care.

Prior to her current appointment, Ms Lee was the Group Chief Financial Officer of the then-newly-formed National University Health System. She also served as Finance Director of National University Hospital, where she was pivotal in implementing IT systems and financial frameworks, and leading a successful financial turnaround.

Ms Lee holds a concurrent role as SingHealth's Deputy Group Chief Financial Officer (Regional Health System and Strategic Finance), supporting Population Health initiatives in the Eastern region.



A letter written by  
**A/Professor  
 Lita Chew**



To me, life is a journey. My life journey brought me to study Pharmacy at National University of Singapore. My mother chose Pharmacy for me. It was not my choice, but my parents' choice. My education changed me and made me want to do more things. I benefitted greatly and wanted to give back.

“

**We have to adapt, and have a change in mindset. Look at things from a positive perspective: instead of lamenting that the glass is half-empty, let's think of it as a half-full glass, and focus our energies on finding ways to solve those issues and optimise the limited resources.**



### Being Adaptable

In my leadership journey, someone I much respected taught me this, “We are all humans, at some point in time, human touch is essential.” We need to always keep the human touch as we provide care through technology. As leaders, it is crucial not to lose the human touch, technology is to augment the work we do. We have to adapt and make ourselves dispensable, not indispensable. Future in healthcare is about technology and working with information. We have to work smarter and be adaptable.

Problems such as manpower issue will always be there. It will likely worsen in future. We have to adapt, and have a change in mindset. Look at things from a positive perspective: instead of lamenting that the glass is half-empty, let's think of it as a half-full glass, and focus our energies on finding ways to solve those issues and optimise the limited resources.

### Focus On What Matters

I have four kids, in their teens. Imagine, I sat for the PSLE five times! My family comes first. In my younger years I worked three shifts – but I managed

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**As leaders, it is crucial not to lose the human touch, technology is to augment the work we do. We have to adapt and make ourselves dispensable, not indispensable. Future in healthcare is about technology and working with information. We have to work smarter and be adaptable.**

my time and made sure I was there for my family when they needed me.

Sometimes, I am asked this question: Do you check emails while on leave? The simple answer is that I cannot afford not to, and this is true of many of us. In the day, we have no time to answer emails. At night, when all's done, we can finally check emails. I answer my emails anytime,



anywhere. I told my staff they do not have to reply. It is just my working schedule. I try not to reply on weekends, unless it is urgent.

Many of us have limited time, and many demands on that time, both work and personal. How can we manage while still taking care of ourselves? We need to prioritise. You must know what is most important to you and prioritise, plan and act accordingly. In my case, I am disciplined and detailed - I plan out my schedule, including time with my kids. That is how I balance and keep a sane mind! Believe in yourself, you can and you will.

**“Ithaka”: A Journey of Adventure and Discovery**

My professional journey has been like the poem “Ithaka”, by the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy. What matters is that you enjoy the journey and scenery, and you will find that the entire journey is very meaningful.

I did not do fantastically well in Pharmacy. I went on to pursue oncology pharmacy at the Singapore General Hospital. That is what I discovered I loved and what I am still doing today. My oncology journey took me to a higher career.

“  
You must know what is  
most important to you  
and prioritise, plan and  
act accordingly.”



How did I end up in NUS and MOH? Often, if you are clear of your purpose and contribute sincerely, people will come to know about it and can see you truly for what you are. All my life I had only applied for one job. I know who I am and I know what I want to do. In this one job, I was offered various positions and jobs. Whatever came first, I would take. My first boss told me, they needed a cover at oncology and few would take it up as it deals with toxic and hazardous drugs.

My inquisitive nature and desire to solve problems brought me to places. Similarly, how I read pharmacy, how I got my first job and how I ended up with many portfolios, it all seemed like serendipity. The reality is that people can see you for what you are and opportunities will come your way.

Enjoy the journey to your own *Ithakas*. Keep your goal in your heart but remember that it is the journey that matters, and you will find that you have gained immeasurable riches of experience, wisdom, and friends along the way.



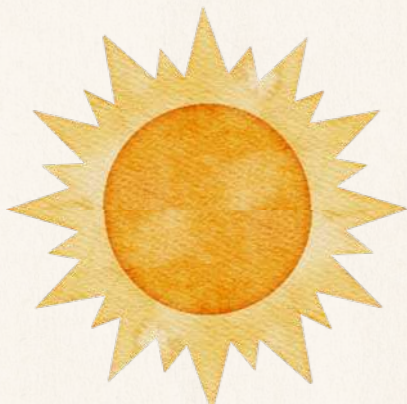
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Enjoy the journey to your own *Ithakas*. Keep your goal in your heart but remember that it is the journey that matters, and you will find that you have gained immeasurable riches of experience, wisdom, and friends along the way.



### **Ithaka**

*As you set out for Ithaka  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.*

*Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:  
you'll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.*

*Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.*

*Hope your road is a long one.  
May there be many summer mornings when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind—  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.*

*Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you're destined for.  
But don't hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you're old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.*

*Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you wouldn't have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.  
And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.*

*Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.*



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
LITA CHEW**

*Group Director (Allied Health),  
Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd*

Associate Professor Lita Chew received her pharmacy degree from NUS and moved on to obtain her post-graduate masters in medical science in Clinical Oncology at University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. She completed her fellowship training in Pharmacy Practice at the University Illinois Chicago, USA. A/Prof Chew is an influential leader in the health care sector with over 25 years of practice experience. Her works impacts pharmacy workforce and pharmaceutical landscape in Singapore. She has guided the establishment of register for specialist pharmacists, training and development framework for pharmacist specialists, national pharmacy residency training, review of pharmacist and pharmacy technician career paths, development of competency framework for advanced pharmacy practice pharmacists and pharmacy technician, and led the development of National Pharmacy Strategy, a 10-year plan to transform pharmaceutical landscape in Singapore. She currently holds concurrent positions as Group Director (Allied Health) at Singhealth, Head of Pharmacy at National Cancer Centre Singapore, Senior Advisor for Chief Pharmacist's Office at MOH and a faculty member of NUS Pharmacy Department.



A letter written by  
**Mr**  
**Chan Yeng Kit**

### Fighting The Last War?

I had the privilege (some say misfortune) of being plunged into the midst of the COVID-19 crisis not long after stepping into my 11th posting in public service. The “crisis of a generation,” as Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong put it, has reinforced some key leadership principles I learnt over the years. I hope to share this with you to encourage you as you continue your leadership journey.

“  
 Ideally, a leader should know his people well and has built a wealth of social capital.”

### People Are Most Important

It may sound like a cliché, but I strongly believe that people are the most important wherever you go. We all work in teams, even surgeons do not do their work alone, but rely on a team in the operating theatre to support them in the work of healing patients.

COVID-19 was a major challenge for me. Ideally, a leader should know his people well and has built a wealth of social capital. That was something I did not have, having moved to MOH just before the pandemic struck Singapore. I was fortunate to have great colleagues and an experienced

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 I strongly believe that people are the most important wherever you go. We all work in teams, even surgeons do not do their work alone, but rely on a team in the operating theatre to support them in the work of healing patients.”



team with good people who knew the ground, exercised initiative and worked together to tackle the novel situation.

In my previous posting at MINDEF, there was a lunch club that all senior officers must subscribe to. I was able to meet colleagues in a casual setting. This provided precious opportunities to hear their candid personal views on issues and policies, beyond what was surfaced through official channels. Interpersonal trust was built through such informal engagements, and I cherish this as an important way to have an ear to the ground. Now that we are not able to meet as often, I have had to be more deliberate and intentional to get to know members of the MOH team better.

### United As One

Looking back at the last two years, a major source of encouragement for me personally was seeing a whole-of-government resolve at work, both in healthcare and in the wider civil service, as everyone rallied together to fight COVID-19. The display of unity was unprecedented in scope and intensity, far surpassing that during the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak.

When MOH had to go around to ask for resources and volunteers, no ministry turned down the requests. The same united spirit was seen within the MOH family - clusters & agencies standing up to face the challenge together, from assuaging manpower needs to running medical facilities at foreign worker dormitories.

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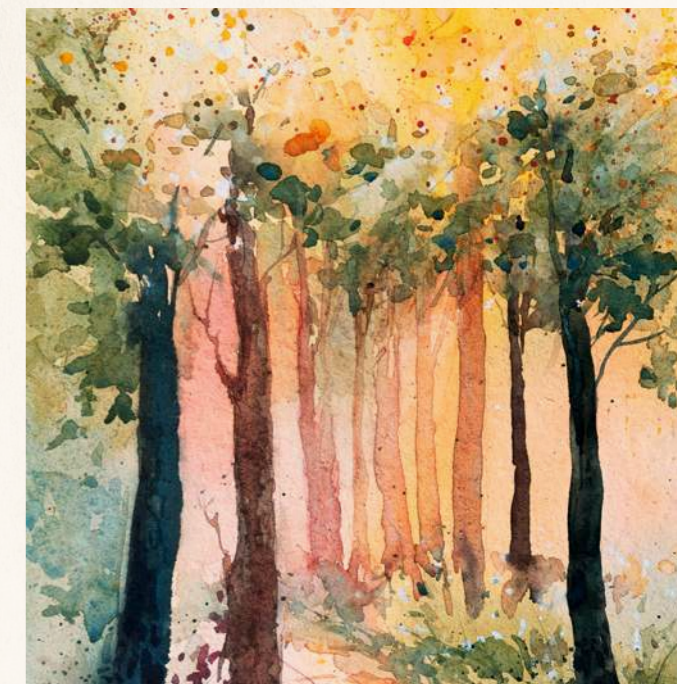
... we had to modify our approach along the way. This is something that we have to learn and adapt as we face more complex challenges going ahead.



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Looking back at the last two years, a major source of encouragement for me personally was seeing a whole-of-government resolve at work, both in healthcare and in the wider civil service, as everyone rallied together to fight COVID-19.

By and large, we have done well in our COVID-19 response. There were, of course, many areas we could have done better. We will do a full after-action review to identify and close any gaps, even as we constantly examine and improve our operations. For example, our starting point for COVID-19 was based on SARS because that was the last major outbreak. Using the military analogy of fighting the last war, we were prepared for a short, sharp battle like what happened during SARS. However, COVID-19 did not behave like SARS. So we had to modify our approach along the way. This is something that we have to learn and adapt as we face more complex challenges going ahead.



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... it is almost a given that everything worthwhile to think about, our predecessors would probably have thought about, and put in place what was the best policy or measure for that time. Therefore, understanding their rationale and choices made are important.

### Changing Wheels Of Moving Bus

Beyond COVID-19, there are many areas in the healthcare domain that we want to work on. MOH existed even before Singapore's self-governance. Our predecessors are smart people. So, it is almost a given that everything worthwhile to think about, our predecessors would probably have thought about, and put in place what was the best policy or measure for that time. Therefore, understanding their rationale and choices made are important.

That is not to say that we do not change, because the operating context within which those decisions were made might have changed. This then is the impetus for leaders to understand the current environment and what changes this bears on our policies and programmes, and how

we then make the necessary changes to bring the healthcare system forward.

The complexity of change in healthcare is enormous - akin to changing the wheels of a moving bus. The system cannot afford to stop for a second. Yet, transformation is crucial, not necessarily because the system or policies are broken, but because the wider environment has evolved and the population we are serving has changed. Like a bus with worn-out tyres, change is often needed to avoid a blowout and ensure the going remains smooth.

Our healthcare system may not be perfect. But it is the envy of many around the world. May we work together to make it better, and may you as leaders be part of and lead that change.



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The complexity of change in healthcare is enormous - akin to changing the wheels of a moving bus. The system cannot afford to stop for a second.



**MR CHAN YENG KIT**  
Permanent Secretary (Health),  
Ministry of Health

Mr Chan Yeng Kit was appointed Permanent Secretary (Health) in December 2019. Prior to this, he was Permanent Secretary (Defence) from 2013 to 2019, Permanent Secretary (Defence Development) from 2012 to 2013, and Permanent Secretary (Information, Communications & the Arts) from 2008 to 2012.

Mr Chan's career has spanned a range of appointments in Government, the labour movement, and the private sector. These include management positions in the Public Service Division, National Trades Union Congress, Singapore-Suzhou Township Development Pte Ltd, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Education. He was Chief Executive Officer of the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore from 2005 to 2007.

Mr Chan graduated with First Class Honours in Mathematics from the University of Tasmania, earned his Master in Public Administration from Harvard University, and completed the Advanced Management Programme at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He was awarded the Singapore Armed Forces National Serviceman of the Year Award in 1999, conferred the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 2000, and the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 2010.



A letter written by  
**A/Professor  
 Benjamin Ong**



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One key trend that we need to watch carefully is medical advancement – new medical technologies, new diagnostic tools, new medications.



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I feel that it is critical to shift the focus from acute care towards preventive and primary care, and intermediate and long-term care.

**In your view, what is the top priority for Singapore healthcare today?**

I feel that it is critical to shift the focus from acute care towards preventive and primary care, and intermediate and long-term care. It is a challenging and slow process because many members of the public and doctors still see the acute care model as the best way to do things. But if we do not change, with life expectancies and chronic diseases on the rise, we will face a huge and unsustainable strain on manpower and financial resources – without necessarily seeing better health and treatment outcomes.

**What are some of the implications of the shifts in care approaches?**

Shifting our focus towards upstream and downstream care also means that we need to move more resources there. For example, should we reduce manpower in the acute hospitals and have more doctors and nurses work in community care and nursing homes? Should acute hospitals rethink the way they operate: for example, more day treatments instead of inpatient admissions, working with intermediate and step-down care providers so that patients don't stay longer than necessary? For doctors, are fewer prepared to become specialists and work as family physicians? These are the hard choices and trade-offs that will have to be made.



### What are some important trends or developments in healthcare to monitor closely?

One key trend that we need to watch carefully is medical advancement – new medical technologies, new diagnostic tools, new medications. We need to assess the cost-effectiveness of the medical interventions, so that we deliver care that is appropriate to needs. It is simply not sustainable for us to keep on using the most advanced technologies and latest medications. The Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE) was set up to evaluate the use of health technologies and provide guidance on the use of high cost technologies and treatments. But most importantly, we need a mindset shift throughout the system, to have doctors and members of the healthcare family understand and share this principle of providing care at the right level and not over-treating.

### Pokémon Go has taken the world by storm. What are your views on the game?

The Pokémon Go phenomenon has encouraged physical activity. This is a positive thing – it has gotten many more Singaporeans out and about in order to “catch ‘em all”, or to hatch a rare Pokémon to add to their collection. In my case, as I walk for exercise almost every night, I could potentially hatch a lot of eggs. We should similarly think about how we can leverage on different platforms that are fun and exciting, to improve fitness.

### What are we doing in the areas of primary and preventive care, which are critical in our care transformation journey?

Most primary care today is provided by the private GPs, so we need to work hand-in-hand with them on our journey in transforming care: supporting them in disease prevention and chronic disease management efforts. The private GPs have very different considerations and challenges in operating a sustainable livelihood. We need to better understand their needs and aspirations, and identify those with positive mindsets who are willing to work together with us.

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...as public healthcare leaders, you must always remember that healthcare is a calling – it is a lifetime of service and duty to the people of Singapore.

### What are the leadership attributes needed to take the Singapore healthcare system into the future?

I urge our public healthcare leaders to be open-minded to changes, and to bear in mind the larger system considerations. Some of us may feel that what we can do is limited, some don't see the changes as relevant to them, and others say that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. But we can all do more to nudge changes in this direction within our own spheres of influence. For example, where possible, prescribe generic drugs instead of brand-name drugs, do not test excessively, and do not keep patients in the hospitals for longer than necessary. Most importantly, as public healthcare leaders, you must always remember that healthcare is a calling – it is a lifetime of service and duty to the people of Singapore.



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BENJAMIN ONG**  
Senior Vice President  
(Health Education & Resources),  
National University of Singapore

Senior Consultant, Division of Neurology,  
Department of Medicine,  
National University Hospital

Associate Professor Benjamin Ong is Senior Vice President (Health Education & Resources) at the National University of Singapore and a Senior Consultant Neurologist with the Division of Neurology, National University Hospital. He also serves as Chairman of the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) and Member of the Public Service Commission. His career in healthcare and academic medicine has spanned more than 30 years since his return from his fellowship training. Apart from undergraduate education, A/Prof Ong has championed postgraduate medicine education, particularly in neurology and medicine. He was one of the pioneers in the development and development of IT in Healthcare as well as process improvement in patient care delivery.

A/Prof Ong has held various leadership positions in healthcare including headship of the Department of Medicine at the National University Hospital and the National University of Singapore, Chairman of the Medical Board of the National University Hospital and Chief Executive of the National University Health System. A/Prof Ong served as Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health, Singapore from 2014 to January 2020.



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If you care enough about the system and its future, do something about it. We currently have a good system but it can always be improved, and it certainly needs to be enhanced and reshaped for a future which will be very different.

*Prof Tan Chorh Chuan*

It is not the strongest of  
the species  
that survives,  
nor the most intelligent;  
it is the one most  
adaptable to change

Charles Darwin



A letter written by  
**Professor**  
**Yeoh Khay Guan**

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As leaders, you will be involved in leading change and transformation in your departments and institutions in one way or the other.



I once heard this definition of leadership: “To make good things happen that on their own would not happen”. This came from Mr Lim Siong Guan, former Head of the Singapore Civil Service. This is inspiring and one of the best definitions of leadership that I have come across. Without leadership, positive changes do not happen naturally on their own.

### A Strong Sense Of Purpose

As leaders, you will be involved in leading change and transformation in your departments and institutions in one way or the other. To lead change, you will need to **create a strong sense of purpose** by identifying aspirations and explaining the “Why” - i.e. provide a compelling and clear narrative of the need for change. Why is there a need for this direction to be set? Why does this plan need to be put in place? Why can't we continue with the current methods when things are going well? By answering the “Why”, this will make the need for change real and concrete for the people in your team. Once they are convinced of the rationale for change, they will be aligned and focused on what needs to be done to make change happen.

In implementing change, you do not need to aim for perfection at the start. Instead, start by launching something functional first, improve it along the way, and celebrate the small wins. When your team members can see something tangible, the change will become real to them and it will be easier for them to internalise and understand why change is happening and get on board.

### Aim High

We should aim high and at the same time bear in mind that **failing is not the same as failure**. In aiming high, there will surely be times when we will miss the mark. Do not blame the officer who has tried his best. Supporting one another in such moments is crucial to inspiring excellence. Similarly, be kind to yourself if you have made a mistake. It is a learning experience, do not keep berating yourself for past mistakes but look towards the future and what can be done to improve and progress.

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In implementing change, you do not need to aim for perfection at the start. Instead, start by launching something functional first, improve it along the way, and celebrate the small wins.





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Look after your team and your people. Care for people, have the heart to listen and understand; empathise and be compassionate. This will generate positive energy and create positive expectations of others.

#### Take Care Of Your People

Look after your team and your people. Care for people, have the heart to listen and understand; empathise and be compassionate. This will generate positive energy and create positive expectations of others.

You can demonstrate care and empathy through a few ways. Be there for your team and listen to



them, understand what their concerns are and what issues are troubling them. For example, go to the ward and talk to the nurses and the ward doctors. It gives you a feel of what is happening on the ground. Reach out to interact with people. You can meet ten personally, a hundred in a townhall and write to a thousand to connect with them. I hope for you not only to listen more, but also to communicate back. Effective communication is half the battle won.

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Make sure to give yourself enough thinking time, so that you are able to break out of firefighting mode to create and enlarge the space for transformation and effecting change.

#### Create The Future!

Make sure to give yourself enough thinking time, so that you are able to break out of firefighting mode to create and enlarge the space for transformation and effecting change.

Leadership is a journey; I am still Learning with a big “L”. Enjoy the journey as we grow and serve together and most importantly, take good care of your people and yourselves through this journey.



**PROFESSOR YEOH KHAY GUAN**

*Irene Tan Liang Kheng Professor in Medicine and Oncology*

*Chief Executive,  
National University Health System*

*Senior Vice President (Health Affairs),  
National University of Singapore*

Professor Yeoh is Chief Executive of the National University Health System, in which capacity he leads an integrated academic health system including public primary care clinics, community, general, and tertiary hospitals, national specialty centers in cancer, cardiovascular, and oral health, and the National University of Singapore’s medical, nursing, dental, and public health schools under one unified governance.

His concurrent appointments include the Irene Tan Liang Kheng Professor in Medicine and Oncology and Senior Vice President (Health Affairs), National University of Singapore. He practices as a Senior Consultant at the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, National University Hospital (NUH). He served as Dean of NUS School of Medicine from 2011 to 2018.

Prof Yeoh received his MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) from NUS in 1987. He trained in internal medicine and gastroenterology at NUH. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London and Glasgow, and a member of the American Gastroenterology Association and American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. He has received several awards for his contributions to research, medical education and healthcare, including the Nishi-Takahashi Memorial Lecturer in 2011, the National Outstanding Clinician Scientist Award conferred by the Ministry of Health in 2013, the Public Administration Medal at the Singapore National Day Awards in 2016, and the 20th MSGH Oration by the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology and Hepatology in 2020.





A letter written by  
**Professor**  
**Tan Chorh Chuan**

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We currently have a good system but it can always be improved, and it certainly needs to be enhanced and reshaped for a future which will be very different.

Our healthcare system, while very good, needs to transform itself to be effective in a fast-changing future. People, especially leaders, are fundamental to this transformation. I would like to share my personal reflections on leadership and in particular, how small groups of people might influence a large complex system. I hope you will find this useful.

### Start With Your Motivation

What is your personal motivation to take up a leadership role? What are the burning issues that you feel should be addressed after five years, after 10 years? What is the strength of your conviction? When I am offered new leadership opportunities and roles, I start by asking myself what are my personal reasons to lead.

The first time I did so was when I was unexpectedly asked to be the Dean of the NUS' Faculty of Medicine. I asked myself "Why do I want to be the Dean? What are the major issues that must be tackled and why are these important?" I decided to accept the role because I was not satisfied with the status quo then, and felt I should step up to help change things.

I encourage you to have the same sense of "constructive dis-satisfaction". If you care enough about the system and its future, do something about it. We currently have a good system but it can always be improved, and it certainly needs to be enhanced and reshaped for a future which will be very different.

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A large part of transformation involves influencing and persuading others to do things differently.

I hope you will find time to reflect on your personal motivation to lead as this provides the key driving force for your own leadership journey. There are of course many different types of leadership and many successful ways to lead. Personally, I particularly admire leaders with small egos but who seek to create a large societal impact beyond themselves and their organisations.

### Engage-Do-Learn

A large part of transformation involves influencing and persuading others to do things differently. This is usually not easy. Why would people want to work with you to reshape things?

How do you persuade others, including parties whom you have no "control" over, to come along? I think one of the most important steps is to develop



the case for change which is compelling not just for yourself, but for those you are seeking to engage as partners in that change. This often means finding the common areas of interest and bigger system-level goals that provide the shared impetus for action - in other words, when working together, both you and your partners are better able to achieve these and other goals. It also means that you need to have, or should develop, useful value propositions for those you engage.

There are many stakeholders in the health system whom we need to influence to make change happen. Effective engagement is central to this process. There are different approaches but one I have found useful is to progressively engage broadening concentric circles of stakeholders and partners. Start with a core group of people or partners whose participation is important and who are more likely to have a commonality of goals, and work together with them. Learning from this, and ideally with some proof-of-concept points, engage a next and wider circle of people and partners to work together on the same or complementary areas, and so on.

At each stage, you will likely encounter probing questions and receive much feedback including difficult ones. On the surface, this could be a discouraging process. Instead, I feel that such candid and deep engagement is actually very valuable. It allows you to gain a better understanding of your partners' interests and concerns, and to articulate how joint action for change could also address them. Open, robust but constructive engagement also serves to build the trust and respect essential for successful partnerships. I also find that being asked difficult questions forces you to reflect on your own assumptions and to improve your initial ideas and plans very substantially. As a leader, it is always

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**As a leader, it is always good to have a small kernel of doubt. It enables you to really listen and to adapt and change when others have better ideas or raise important points you had not considered.**

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**... we can also foster a constructive culture of engagement and robust discussion in our organisations and with our partners.**

good to have a small kernel of doubt. It enables you to really listen and to adapt and change when others have better ideas or raise important points you had not considered. I would also note though that if your kernel of doubt is too big, it results in indecisiveness. If it is too small, you effectively stop listening to others. But if you can strike a good balance, it will stand you in good stead in this “engage-do-learn” framework.

In this spirit, I would encourage you to speak to a wide range of people, including critical ones, and test your ideas with them. In explaining and defending them, your own thinking becomes much sharper. Similarly, as leaders, we can also foster a constructive culture of engagement and robust discussion in our organisations and with our partners.



**PROFESSOR TAN CHORH CHUAN**  
Executive Director,  
MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation

*Inaugural Chief Health Scientist,  
Ministry of Health*

Professor Tan served as President of the National University of Singapore from 2008 to 2017. He was former Dean of the NUS Faculty of Medicine and served as the Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health, from 2000 to 2004, in which capacity he was responsible for leading the public health response to the 2003 SARS epidemic. As the inaugural Chief Executive of the National University Health System in 2008, Prof Tan brought the NUS Medical and Dental Schools and the National University Hospital under single governance.



A letter written by  
**Professor  
 Kenneth Kwek**

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**In large organisations such as our clusters and institutions, one person cannot bring about change single-handedly. We need a group of people to cascade the message downstream for action to take place.**



Leading a team during a pandemic can be overwhelming and may well be the largest test that many leaders face in his or her lifetime. I am heartened to see our colleagues across clusters and institutions step up to support one another without hesitation. You are not alone. I hope you find comfort in this sense of community as we stand with one another

through these trying times. In this letter, I would like to share some insights on leadership which I gathered through my career and may these guide you through your journey in healthcare.

#### **Materialising Organisational Change Locally**

In large organisations such as our clusters and institutions, one person cannot bring about change single-handedly. We need a group of people to cascade the message downstream for action to take place. Change management forms a huge part of driving transformation and I believe there are two key elements that are fundamental to its success.

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**There are times where a cause, however compelling, is met with great resistance. I have learned through negotiations that we need to separate a person's position from their interests.**

1. We need to envision an end-state that is captivating. By crystalising our vision, our peers and colleagues can better understand the rationale of our plans and rally behind them.
2. Time and effort should be invested to reach out to people. By having a keen interest in the needs of our staff and a listening ear, we validate their feedback and foster a greater understanding as to why some of their concerns may not be addressed in the immediate future.

There are times where a cause, however compelling, is met with great resistance. I have learned through negotiations that we need to separate a person's position from their interests. Often, we will realise that their concerns stem from a point of pride or ability. Through dialogue, we try to accommodate and address different interests, and take small steps to facilitate the transition and ease the discomfort of change. Hence, we strive to engage our staff and build their trust so that they know that their feedback is valued and will be taken into account in the process of decision-making.



### Cluster-centric Mindset, Institution-Driven Goals

When I was appointed CEO of SGH, someone asked me how I would ensure that the culture of the hospital was not displaced by SingHealth's identity. For many of us, our place of work defines our sense of belonging. I feel that it is natural to identify more closely with your primary institution or work units and these sentiments can exist together with a sense of belonging to the larger organisation.

When the various healthcare institutions consolidated to three clusters, our leaders had to strike a balance and leverage on the efficiencies of being a cluster while preserving the culture of each institution. The clusters exist to support the

institutions, not displace them. It is essential for cluster leaders to recognise the opportunities for collaboration and build on each other's strengths. By fostering a sense of loyalty both at the cluster and institution levels, we inspire synergy in our work and, ultimately, improve the care to our patients which is invariably delivered and experienced at the institution level.

### Nurturing Leaders And Fueling Passion For Healthcare

Leadership takes on various forms of professional expertise, personality, and style. However, many of us take pride in our deep knowledge of our field. Beyond specialising, we must be able to see the larger picture at the sector and even national level, not just the specific considerations of our

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**Beyond specialising, we must be able to see the larger picture at the sector and even national level, not just the specific considerations of our specialisations, and understand the difficult trade-offs that have to be made in the interest of the larger whole.**

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**We become better leaders by being transparent with our shortcomings and building on the strengths of others through collaboration.**

specialisations, and understand the difficult trade-offs that have to be made in the interest of the larger whole.

As leaders in public healthcare, we should build on that spirit of looking at larger interests in doing what is right.

We become better leaders by being transparent with our shortcomings and building on the strengths of others through collaboration. Through our work and interactions, every day, we work towards building a culture that upholds duty, a sense of belonging and a shared vision – one that supports our goals for public healthcare.



**PROFESSOR KENNETH KWEK**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Singapore General Hospital

Deputy Group Executive Officer,  
Innovation & Informatics,  
Singapore Health Services Pte Ltd

Professor Kenneth Kwek is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

Prof Kwek is passionate about improving the quality of patient care and harnessing process re-engineering, innovation and technology to enhance the safety and reliability of clinical care and patient outcomes. In July 2017, Prof Kwek was concurrently appointed Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Organisational Transformation & Informatics), SingHealth.

Leveraging on his experience in hospital management, Prof Kwek attempts to advance value-based care incorporating research and innovation, process redesign and deep collaboration.

Prior to his appointment as CEO, SGH, Prof Kwek was CEO of KK Women's and Children's Hospital. He is an obstetrician specialising in Maternal Fetal Medicine, with a clinical interest centered around care for high risk pregnancies, particularly preterm labour, cervical incompetence, pre-eclampsia as well as post-partum hemorrhage.



A letter written by  
**Doctor**  
**Daphne Khoo**



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All effective leaders  
 need to be good  
 change managers.

Throughout my leadership journey, I have often thought, “I don’t really understand why my Boss made this decision.” On a number of occasions, I have disagreed with the decisions made and yet have had to convey these orders to my team and ensure the instructions were carried out. Even though these things may not be within our control, we as leaders still have to find ways to push through unpopular

decisions or difficult projects while trying to reduce or prevent conflicts from happening. We also have to recognise that there are times that bosses may not be at full liberty to share with us all the reasons for a particular decision.

#### Influencing Change In A Team

All effective leaders need to be good change managers. Change is never easy and I have always found John Kotter’s 8-Step Process for Leading Change to be a very useful framework. Coming from the healthcare sector, everyone generally has good intentions but due to our fast-paced lifestyles, finding the time to communicate adequately with one another is a constant challenge. Hence, it is important to remind ourselves that change management processes need to be well designed and executed.

A critical aspect of implementing change is to gain the cooperation of key stakeholders starting with your own team. People working in the public sector often feel that they are already working at maximum capacity. Therefore to convince staff to willingly take on additional work, efforts need to be put in to explain to them why the changes are important and necessary. When staff buy into

the change goals, and especially when they switch from reluctance to being passionate about the project, then amazing results can be achieved.

After working for almost 40 years, I also found that one misconception people tend to have is that employees have to do exactly what they are told. I disagree. Most bosses generally get to their positions because they are intelligent people with certain skills and competencies. However, many leaders including myself, often need to make rapid assessments and decisions without the time and resources to do adequate evaluations and may not have full knowledge of the situation. At those times, when staff genuinely believe the decision being

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...leaders still have to find  
 ways to push through  
 unpopular decisions or  
 difficult projects while  
 trying to reduce or prevent  
 conflicts from happening.



taken is not the best one, there is an obligation to point this out in a respectful and polite manner, while providing alternative solutions preferably backed up by facts and reliable data. The worst supervisors are those who simply inform the staff that the organisation has made poor decisions and that staff have no choice but to support this. This demoralises staff and conveys the impression that the supervisor has no influence or courage.



The saying “where there’s a will, there’s a way” generally holds true. On a trip to India, I witnessed how the Aravind Eye Hospitals worked first-hand. The Aravind mission is to cure avoidable blindness and each week, hundreds of poor villagers with no access to good eye care facilities are bused in from remote locations to receive free surgeries. To tackle the issue of shortage of manpower and costs, the organisation trains village girls to perform routine and repetitive tasks, so that the professional ophthalmologists can focus on providing treatment to the patients. Aravind also produced their own cataract lenses as lenses produced overseas were unaffordable. I was surprised that one of the Aravind strategic thrusts was “Strengthening our Competitors” and asked why this was so. They replied that even

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A critical aspect of implementing change is to gain the cooperation of key stakeholders starting with your own team.”

though they were competitors, they still shared a common mission. This incredible organisational vision, sense of mission and process efficiency has resulted in Aravind becoming the largest Eye care facility in the world, with most of the care going to those who are unable to pay.

In some situations, all the options are seemingly bad. You are caught between a rock and a hard place. Most of these tensions arise from workload where staff are required to take on additional work which they believe to be unnecessary or unreasonable. If you yourself believe that to be the case, then the first step is to discuss this with your own supervisor. It is difficult to motivate staff when neither the Boss nor the staff believe

that work is important or necessary. Other problems which are seemingly trivial such as moving to a smaller office or a less convenient parking area, can be surprisingly emotive. In these situations, the processes have to be seen to be at least transparent and fair even if all options are unpopular.

The importance of emotional connections cannot be emphasised enough. Talented staff have many options, they will be successful wherever they choose to work. Therefore leaders have to consider why would people want to work for you. It is important to demonstrate that you value and appreciate staff. This could be through celebrating successes however small, sharing meals, giving

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Talented staff have many options, they will be successful wherever they choose to work. Therefore leaders have to consider why would people want to work for you. It is important to demonstrate that you value and appreciate staff.”



them your time and attention, or even a simple but sincere statement of thanks.

### Motivation At Work

The public sector usually cannot reward staff with external motivators such as high salaries, therefore internal motivators are critical. I like the work of Daniel Pink, an American author, who has stated that people are motivated by 3 intrinsic elements: Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose.

Having spent most of my working life in the public sector as a doctor, I am used to having large amounts of autonomy in decision making. Shifting to the Ministry is a huge culture shock for those used to working in our public healthcare institutions or the private sector. Policy work is multifaceted and by necessity collaborative in nature. The perspectives of healthcare professionals, funding bodies, patients and the public all need to be considered in policy making and there is no such thing as autonomy in policy design as opposed to the treatment you order for a patient. This is not a bad thing but rather a mindset shift is required and leaders need to understand how to motivate staff who are

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**People should also be given the appropriate exposure and training to develop expertise in the areas they and the organisation need.**

used to high levels of autonomy moving to less autonomous roles. The converse is also true in that people shifting from environments with little autonomy also struggle when moved to those where they are expected to make decisions independently. Regardless, job satisfaction is generally higher when staff feel that they are empowered to make decisions.

Secondly, everyone enjoys the feeling of personal achievement, progress and growth. Staff should be assigned tasks which are not so easy that they're bored and yet so difficult that they feel overwhelmed and eventually burn out. This is the so called stretch or Goldilocks zone. People should also be given the appropriate exposure and

training to develop expertise in the areas they and the organisation need.

Finally, the last element is the purpose of our work. As healthcare workers, especially in the public space, there is no shortage of work or projects that have purpose and an altruistic element. Even when highly trained specialists such as cardiologists and surgeons were deployed as throat swabbers during COVID-19, they still found the work to be meaningful and emotionally rewarding.

### Team Dynamics

During my stint in the private sector I interacted heavily with HR and OD experts because we had to integrate healthcare teams and leaders from 11 countries each with different country and organisational cultures, performance management metrics and HR practices. As we hired new leaders or transferred leaders from one country to another, HR played a big role in personality assessments and evaluations for job and role fit. I learned that different types of leadership teams were required at various stages of an organisation's growth and that just because a leader had a proven track record in

one company, this was no guarantee of success in another. In many MNCs today, even junior potential hires undergo 5 rounds of assessments of some form or other, for job fit. Things are very different in public healthcare where we tend to hire people after 1-2 rounds of relatively unstructured interviews.

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**We talk a lot about leadership but almost never about followership. Leaders are only as effective as their followers. The role of the First Follower is often critical in attracting subsequent followers. Good leaders are usually also effective followers. Almost all leaders are accountable to someone else.**







We talk a lot about leadership but almost never about followership. Leaders are only as effective as their followers. The role of the First Follower is often critical in attracting subsequent followers. Good leaders are usually also effective followers. Almost all leaders are accountable to someone else. I would like to believe I am a good leader but I am sure I am a good follower. If a leader and his/

her boss are not aligned, the staff will bear the consequences in various ways. A former research mentor of mine used to tell me that his own boss and he had complementary roles and each would not have succeeded without the other. While my mentor led the cutting edge scientific research teams, his boss focused on bringing in the funding and international networks necessary for success.

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No one starts off being excellent, and every experience helps us to grow. All of us will make mistakes and learn from them.

Different leadership styles work well depending on the nature, size and maturity of the organisation as well as the personalities within the team. As a current leader, you might have had to build your team from scratch, been promoted from your department ranks or been parachuted in from a different department or organisation. Each situation presents different challenges. It is impossible to be technically strong in all fronts of your department's work but at minimum, staff expect that they should be able to trust and respect their leaders.

No one starts off being excellent, and every experience helps us to grow. All of us will make mistakes and learn from them. I wish you all the best and hope the sharing of my experiences will help you on your journey of becoming a respected and effective leader.



**DR DAPHNE KHOO**  
Deputy Director of Medical Services  
(Healthcare Performance Group),  
Ministry of Health

Executive Director  
(Agency for Care Effectiveness),  
Ministry of Health

Dr Daphne Khoo is the Deputy Director of Medical Services (Healthcare Performance Group) and concurrently, Executive Director of the Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE), Ministry of Health, Singapore (MOH). The mission of ACE is to drive appropriate care in Singapore through the application of Health Technology Assessment.

Dr Khoo is an endocrinologist by training and was previously Head of Endocrinology at Singapore General Hospital (SGH). From 2004 to 2011, she was the Director of Clinical Governance and Quality Management of the SingHealth cluster and also served as their Director of Enterprise Risk. She is a past-President of the Association of Women Doctors, Singapore as well as the Association of South East Asian Nations Federation of Endocrine Societies.

From 2011 to 2014, she worked in the private sector as a Chief Medical Officer managing healthcare facilities in 11 countries.



A letter written by

# Doctor Camilla Wong

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As people have different priorities at different stages of their life, it is essential to engage them and understand their views, and ultimately forge good working relationships.



Taking up a leadership position is not an easy task with the journey being like a roller coaster ride. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to becoming a good leader, but here are some lessons I have found useful in my own leadership journey.

## Communication Is Key

Looking back on my earlier days as a young leader, I think the hardest part of the job is people management. As a young leader, managing your subordinates is hard but managing your peers and seniors is even tougher. As people have different priorities at different stages of their life, it is essential to engage them and understand their views, and ultimately forge good working relationships. This requires communication that helps build relationships, otherwise known as relationship-based communication.

Good communication does not just mean verbal communication, it also includes nonverbal communication and importantly, listening. I have learnt that body language and the way you portray yourself when speaking is crucial. I have also come to realise that people will respect and trust you, if you are genuine, have the right motivations, and articulate your intent honestly and clearly. I started practicing all these early in my career and continue to try to perfect them with time. I am very fortunate that the people I work with now, believe in and trust me to lead them through genuine honesty in my words and actions.

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I have also come to realise that people will respect and trust you, if you are genuine, have the right motivations, and articulate your intent honestly and clearly.

## Embracing Change

Next, learn to anticipate change, accept change, and embrace change. I know many of us, myself included, find adjusting to change difficult or even painful. Some may even ask why they cannot keep on doing things the same way, when these ways have worked well in the past.

Let me share my personal experience. In the past, pharmacists, like me, would carry our “encyclopedia of Drugs” in our hands and walk around like “Drug Lords”. Whenever doctors or nurses asked us about an unfamiliar drug, we would flip through the book rapidly and find the information – it was such a position of power to have access to information! I also had another forte – counting pills swiftly. I like



to believe that I was one of the fastest pill counters in the department then. Now of course, both skills are obsolete. With the advent of the internet and drug monograph apps, all anyone needs to do is to type the drug name into Google or the app, and all the relevant information will appear. Robotic systems now count, sort and package the medications much more rapidly and with much fewer errors than humans did. If these were the only skills I possessed, I would be out of a job now.

The lesson here is that all of us have to be agile and be amenable to change. As healthcare professionals, we have a duty to constantly seek new ways to add value to the healthcare system and to our patients.

As the pace of change accelerates, it is impossible to depend on formal lessons to learn everything, so just-in-time learning is more crucial than ever. Take the COVID-19 pandemic which struck us suddenly. No one received training on how to manage this crisis and respond to it. And yet all of us rose to the occasion to bring the pandemic under control in Singapore. This has demonstrated just how important it is to be nimble in picking up skills quickly, knowing where to source for timely information and embracing changes.

### Learning To Lead

As you rise in your career, you will face increased responsibilities and workload. I would advise all young leaders to identify their priorities and focus their time and effort on the most important areas which need their attention. Don't feel compelled to take on every single task yourself – you may end up becoming a jack of all trades but a master of none.

Another way to manage your workload is to delegate your work. By doing so, you can free yourself up to focus on larger responsibilities while developing your staff to take on more, aiding them to grow their competencies and leadership skills. The “Pygmalion effect” states that higher expectations lead to improved performance in a

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**As you rise in your career, you will face increased responsibilities and workload. I would advise all young leaders to identify their priorities and focus their time and effort on the most important areas which need their attention.**

given area, that is, a person rises when there is an increase in demand of the situation. Hence, as a leader you should seek to develop both yourself and your staff.

Last but not least, the most important trait of a leader is to always be humble and follow your moral compass. In your leadership journey, you will face many challenges and the right decision may not always be obvious or may require you to make difficult tradeoffs. If you know who you are as a leader and what you stand for, you will always make the best decisions for yourself and for your team.

I wish you all a fulfilling leadership journey.



**DR CAMILLA WONG**  
Chief Pharmacist,  
Ministry of Health

Director, Allied Health Division,  
Sengkang General Hospital

Adjunct Associate Professor,  
Department of Pharmacy,  
National University of Singapore

Dr Camilla Wong has 25 years of experience in healthcare and is currently Director, Allied Health, Sengkang General Hospital (SKH) and Chief Pharmacist at the Ministry of Health (MOH).

At SKH, Dr Wong has been integral in the planning of the infrastructure, processes, services not only for Allied Health services but the hospital as a whole. She is a member of a number of SKH committees including the Board and IT Steering Committee, and as part of the SKH Senior Management team, serves as a catalyst for collaborative partnerships between the various departments and SKH stakeholders. As Chief Pharmacist, MOH, Dr Wong oversees the National Pharmacy Strategy which spans over 19 initiatives, encompassing pharmaceutical care excellence, developing a confident pharmacy workforce, re-designing the supply chain, and information and technology enablement.

Dr Wong has played an integral role in the development of career pathways and competency frameworks for the pharmacists and Allied Health professionals both cluster-wide and nationally. She has been a role model and mentor to pharmacists and other healthcare professionals, with many helping leadership and headship positions.



A letter written by

## Ms Susan Niam

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Firstly, I learnt that failures may hurt us initially, 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.

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 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 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 initially, 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.

“

Secondly, we should always be thankful, respectful and keep lasting relationships with people who had taught and guided us.

Ms Susan Niam



### 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 organisations 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 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.

“  
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**MS SUSAN NIAM**  
Chief Allied Health Officer,  
Ministry of Health

Registrar,  
Allied Health Professions Council

Ms Susan Niam is the first 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 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 organisations and associations for more than 20 years.



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When the situation is developing rapidly and there is a lot of uncertainty, understanding the ‘commander’s intent’ will help you make decisions that are aligned with the organisation without having a full picture.

*AI Prof Kenneth Mak*

The wildfires cannot  
burn the grass away,  
it lives again when  
the spring wind blows

Tang Dynasty Poet Bai JuYi

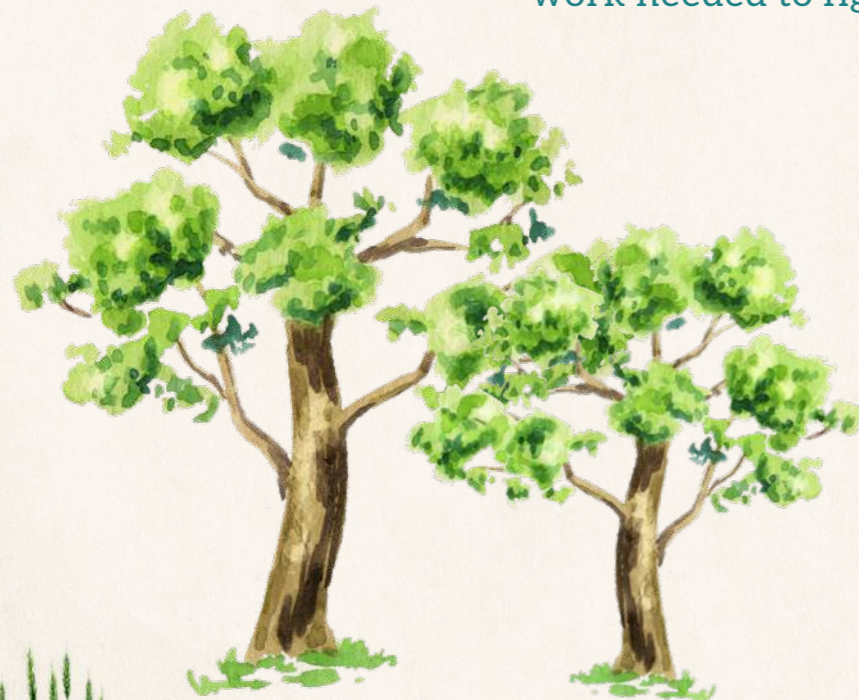
野火烧不尽，  
春风吹又生



A letter written by  
**Professor  
 Philip Choo**

“

In a crisis, it is important for leaders to set clear and specific targets to guide the team, and to help people be engaged with the work needed to fight the battle.



### Provide Clarity And Set Goals

Time is of essence in a crisis. Provide clear direction so that your team knows what to do. During SARS, I gave the team 6 hours to convert normal wards into isolation wards to meet the shortfall of isolation beds. The target was achieved. In a crisis, it is important for leaders to set clear and specific targets to guide the team, and to help people be engaged with the work needed to fight the battle.

### Walk With Your Team

As leaders, you are accountable for the well-being of your staff. Walk with your team and walk the talk – practise the instructions you have given and role model ‘leaderful’ behaviours. Our senior leaders were in the wards every day working alongside the staff during SARS. This signalled trust in the system and gave the staff confidence – the wards were safe, our safety protocols were held up. As a leader, be transparent and communicate with your team. This will allay their anxiety and help them stay calm and focused on what needs to be done.

“

As leaders, you are accountable for the well-being of your staff. Walk with your team and walk the talk – practise the instructions you have given and role model ‘leaderful’ behaviours.



### Be Prepared To Make Tough Decisions

I made the tough decision of recalling all doctors who were on leave to manage the SARS outbreak. During a crisis, you will have to make unpopular, but right decisions. Be guided by your values. Right decision-making is tough. Practise good decision-making during peacetime to build trust and confidence with your team.

Thus, during a crisis, people would continue to put their trust in you and your decisions.

We have many courageous and dedicated people in our healthcare family. I trust that we will be able to weather the fight against COVID-19, just as we emerged stronger after SARS.

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As a leader, be transparent and communicate with your team. This will allay their anxiety and help them stay calm and focused on what needs to be done.



**PROFESSOR PHILIP CHOO**  
Group Chief Executive Officer,  
National Healthcare Group

Senior Consultant,  
Department of Geriatric Medicine,  
Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Clinical Professor,  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine,  
National University of Singapore

Adjunct Professor,  
Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine,  
Nanyang Technological University

“

During a crisis, you will have to make unpopular, but right decisions. Be guided by your values. Right decision-making is tough. Practise good decision-making during peacetime to build trust and confidence with your team.

Professor Philip Choo has been Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) of the National Healthcare Group (NHG) since January 2015. Prior to that, he was Chief Executive Officer, TTSH and Deputy CEO, NHG from 2011-2014. As the Head of the Regional Health System for Central Singapore, Prof Choo drives NHG's on-going care transformation to improve population health. This involves a fundamental shift in focus from facility-centric illness-based care to relationship-centric, wellness-based care. To achieve this goal, Prof Choo formulated the 'River of Life' Framework that stratifies the population and optimises services across the Five Segments of Care - Living Well, Living with Illness, Crisis and Complex Care, Living with Frailty, and Leaving Well. Prof Choo is internationally recognised as an accomplished Geriatrician with some 30 years of experience. With the River of Life, NHG aims to deliver integrated healthcare services and programmes that help in "Adding Years of Healthy Life" to all Singaporeans.



A letter written by  
**A/Professor  
 Kenneth Mak**

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In times of uncertainty, learn to understand the intent and mission-focus of your leaders. And if you are leading, share your intent to guide those under your charge.

You may not know this: when I was introduced as “Director of Medical Services” at the first Multi-Ministry Task Force press conference, I had not been formally appointed as DMS yet. I was the DMS designate, preparing to take over from A/Prof Benjamin Ong. COVID-19 accelerated that transition dramatically.

As a surgeon by profession, I am more comfortable in the operating theatre or clinic than in front of cameras, members of the media, and answering questions live on TV. As the DMS designate, it was the right thing for me to take the lead, as we foresaw that the pandemic would extend beyond the incumbent DMS’ term in office. I had to learn to step up and play a domain leadership role, and to be comfortable doing things I was not used to.

I am grateful to my colleagues for their support and hard work during that period. In the early days, there was much uncertainty and, as DMS, the public looked to me for answers. I found it important to have a deep sense of humility and acknowledge that I did not have all the cards. The expertise existed outside of myself, and this required team-based leadership and collegiality to bring everyone together to address the tasks

at hand. Even the media, whom some might assume were present to question or interrogate the task force, were aligned in wanting to share the most important information and updates with the nation.

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When the situation is developing rapidly and there is a lot of uncertainty, understanding the ‘commander’s intent’ will help you make decisions that are aligned with the organisation without having a full picture.



Though the pandemic is not over yet, I would like to share a few important lessons: In times of uncertainty, learn to understand the intent and mission-focus of your leaders. And if you are leading, share your intent to guide those under your charge. When the situation is developing rapidly and there is a lot of uncertainty, understanding the “commander’s intent” will help you make decisions that are aligned with the organisation without having a full picture.

Second, keep grounded to your personal and organisational values, especially when exercising leadership and influence over others and over decisions. As your leadership responsibilities grow, decisions will need to be made drawing on your domain expertise and also your values. Some values are broadly defined and accepted, but it is important to be clear about what these mean to you on a personal level.



And lastly, stay humble and honest, especially when you are under pressure. The people around you are more likely to follow your lead if you are genuine and slow to anger – even better if you are able to learn to laugh at yourself. I laughed when I saw the internet memes after that press conference when I coughed on camera.

“

... keep grounded to your personal and organisational values, especially when exercising leadership and influence over others and over decisions.

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Stay humble and honest, especially when you are under pressure. The people around you are more likely to follow your lead if you are genuine and slow to anger – even better if you are able to learn to laugh at yourself.



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR KENNETH MAK**  
*Director of Medical Services,  
Ministry of Health*

Associate Professor Kenneth Mak is Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health Singapore. In this role, he oversees the provision of all health services in Singapore.

Since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, A/Prof Mak has been heavily involved in our national efforts to control the outbreak in Singapore. As Director of Medical Services in MOH, he advises the Multi-Ministry Taskforce as well as other governmental agencies in crafting our overall strategy for managing the outbreak and oversees our public health response to combat spread of COVID-19 in our community. A/Prof Mak is a familiar face as he has appeared regularly in the media conferences of the COVID-19 Multi-Ministry Taskforce.

A/Prof Mak was previously Deputy Director of Medical Services (Health Services Group) in MOH from 2015 to 2019. He worked closely with the Regional Health Systems and healthcare institutions in Singapore on care integration as well as on Singapore’s long-term healthcare transformation strategy.

A/Prof Mak was trained as a general surgeon with subspecialty interests in hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery, as well as in trauma surgery. He maintains his clinical practice as a Senior Consultant surgeon in the Department of Surgery, at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Singapore.

A letter written by  
**Emeritus Professor  
 Lim Pin**

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Managing healthcare cost is a universal problem around the world. It is important that we do not let healthcare costs spiral out of hand. Clinicians need to be discerning, to be able to “sort the wheat from the chaff” as not all new technologies or drugs introduced are beneficial or effective.

It was 1965 when I joined the Ministry of Health as a young Medical Officer. It was a time of great uncertainty, as Singapore had just separated from Malaysia and economically, Singapore was dangling on a string. The main priorities of the government then were national security, job creation, housing and education. Healthcare was not key, but there was emphasis on public health and preventive medicine.

Despite all the odds, Singapore was able to pull through the difficult times with good leadership, hard work and efficiency. As a result, our healthcare system has progressed to become one of the best in the world. I believe that this uniquely Singaporean culture of hard work and efficiency as espoused by our pioneer generation has prevailed till today.

**What are some of the challenges and key developments that i see the younger generation of healthcare leaders having to face?**

First, the rising cost of healthcare. Managing healthcare cost is a universal problem around the world. Continuous developments in science and technology have driven advancements in healthcare. However, increasing adoption of technology in healthcare has resulted in higher healthcare costs, even though the actual cost of technology has gone down. We have another challenge, with longer life expectancy and an ageing population, healthcare utilisation increases and overall healthcare costs rises correspondingly.

It is important that we do not let healthcare costs spiral out of hand. We need to discipline ourselves to achieve more for less and I believe we can do it by drawing on our culture of hard work and efficiency - the same “gung-ho” attitude which saw Singapore through the early years and is still present today.

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While specialisation is necessary to treat very difficult and complex conditions, we need generalists – physicians and surgeons with core abilities characterised by a broad-based practice, to diagnose, manage and coordinate care for patients with clinical problems that are diverse and complex.



Second, rapid developments in science and technology. Technological innovations and developments in healthcare have driven many improvements in patient care and made huge impact on medical processes and practices of healthcare professionals. However, technology can also make the life of a clinician much more intense with the rapid introduction of new health technology and drugs and the quickened pace of clinical practice. Clinicians need to be discerning, to be able to “sort the wheat from the chaff” as not all new technologies or drugs introduced are beneficial or effective. There is a need to assess not just effectiveness of new drugs and technologies but also to weigh the cost versus benefit to the patient and the healthcare system. The bottom line is that when we use technology judiciously, there can be great synergy between technology and healthcare.

Next, technological advances have also spurred increasing specialisation in medicine, providing more specialised and focused care for specific conditions. However, patients with comorbidities

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**I believe if we can use technology judiciously, we can reap the benefits while avoiding the pitfalls to enable healthcare to be more cost effective.**



will find it difficult to navigate this trend of subspecialisation. While specialisation is necessary to treat very difficult and complex conditions, we need generalists – physicians and surgeons with core abilities characterised by a broad-based practice, to diagnose, manage and coordinate care for patients with clinical problems that are diverse and complex.

With the advent of the digitalisation of healthcare, we must not forget to retain the human touch when we are with our patients, especially during clinical assessment. We must always communicate with our patients with empathy and compassion, and develop a strong rapport with them and their families. Without rapport and trust between the patient and the clinician, half the battle is lost. When treatment plans do not go as planned, patients and their families may get antagonistic. In turn, clinicians start to practise defensive medicine by prescribing more diagnostic tests and procedures than necessary. When this happens,

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**However, there are certain values and principles that are fundamental and which cannot be sacrificed. Certain fundamentals - our values, medical ethics, and patient welfare are prime concerns in healthcare and cannot change. We must always maintain the human face of medicine even as we reap the benefits of technology.**

Emeritus Prof Lim Pin

we are using technology just to protect ourselves, resulting in higher costs. I believe if we can use technology judiciously, we can reap the benefits while avoiding the pitfalls to enable healthcare to be more cost effective.

Change is inevitable, society and outlook of people will change. Priorities and expectations may shift with successive generations. The younger generation look at things differently, not necessarily in a worse-off way. For instance, the young are more open to disruptions and are more willing to accept differences. We must learn to accept and accommodate, and be prepared to change so as to make progress.

However, there are certain values and principles that are fundamental and which cannot be

sacrificed. Certain fundamentals - our values, medical ethics, and patient welfare are prime concerns in healthcare and cannot change. We must always maintain the human face of medicine even as we reap the benefits of technology.

As a closing note, my wish is that all of us work together across clusters, across institutions, across professions, to secure the confidence and trust of Singaporeans, and not compete among ourselves. We need to pull together wisdom and knowledge, and share whatever resources we have to keep our competitive edge. Remember, our higher purpose is to work for Singapore.



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We need to pull together wisdom and knowledge, and share whatever resources we have to keep our competitive edge. Remember, our higher purpose is to work for Singapore.”



**EMERITUS PROFESSOR LIM PIN**  
*University Professor,  
National University of Singapore*

*Emeritus Consultant,  
National University Hospital*

Emeritus Professor Lim Pin is Professor of Medicine at the National University of Singapore and Senior Consultant Endocrinologist at the National University Hospital. The first person to receive the University's highest academic honour, the University Professorship, Prof Lim has had a distinguished career as the Vice-Chancellor of NUS from 1981 to 2000. Appointed as Vice-Chancellor at the age of 45, the youngest ever to serve in this capacity, Prof Lim led NUS with distinction for almost two decades. Under his leadership, NUS has developed as a tertiary institution whose teaching, scholarship and quality of research command international respect.

While pursuing full-time academic and clinical work, Prof Lim continues to serve in Government committees and corporate Directorships. He is past-Chairman of the Bioethics Advisory Committee and currently Chairman of the Tropical Marine Science Institute Management Board and Advisory Council of Temasek Foundation Innovates CLG. He is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital, Special Needs Trust Company, NUHS Fund & Health Research Endowment Fund, and Jurong Health Fund.

Prof Lim holds a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Cambridge, UK. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Medicine of Singapore (FAMS), FRCP (London), FRACP & FACP.

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One request I have of young, emerging leaders is that as you go along your journey, pay forward everything you've learnt and trust your people.

*Adj A/Prof Yong Keng Kwang*

All the flowers  
of all the  
tomorrows  
are in the seeds  
of today

Indian Proverb



A letter written by  
**Adj A/Professor**  
**Yong Keng Kwang**



Given the choice, I would choose nursing all over again.

I fell in love with nursing during my fourth year in university, where I studied community nursing and could see its direct impact on people. Although I initially applied for a scholarship to study Physiotherapy, I took up nursing when asked because I liked to interact with people and was simply looking for a profession that allowed me to do so. It has been 28 years and I have not had any regrets over that decision.

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**Decision making should be an inclusive process, which takes into account perspectives. This may be difficult as collective decision-making inevitably takes longer, but I believe that the end result will be worth the sacrifice of efficiency.**

**Bridging The Gap And Empowering The Next Generation**

One common complaint in nursing is that it doesn't seem to attract the younger generation. How can we attract more of the younger generation to work in the nursing sector and in the community? How do we build their resilience to prepare them for nursing? To do that, we have to understand their needs, which may be different from ours. We need to be ready to connect with them. This generation is socially motivated and wants to do good, but they get disheartened easily because the ward environment may not be what they had expected. We have to understand that the younger generation grew up in a different environment from us. Thus, instead of criticising them, we need to change our habits and tell them more often that we have their back and support them. We need to be more constructive with them and remind them to see the good in things. If they get a thank you nine out of ten times and get scolded once, we need to remind them not to take the "thank you" for granted. In the same breath, we should also encourage them that they have done well for nine out of the ten encounters, and not to be too hard on themselves for that one unpleasant encounter. I also believe there is a need for shared governance

and collective leadership. We need to realise that the nursing workforce is and will continue to be multigenerational. Even in Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), two thirds of the nurses are below 35 years old. The older generation are in the minority and typically the ones in leadership positions, but they have to accept the differences in the younger generation, and find more ways to empower, embrace, encourage and engage them. Decision making should be an inclusive process, which takes into account multigenerational perspectives. This may be difficult as collective decision-making inevitably takes longer, but I believe that the end result will be worth the sacrifice of efficiency.

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**We are so busy that we learn that we survive best by treating things as tasks to complete instead of finding meaning and purpose in our work.**



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Once you are a leader, you no longer  
think of yourself, you think more  
for the people you lead.”

### Keep The Fire Burning

Many of us have stayed so long in the system that we have forgotten what we used to fight for. We have lost our determination and energy to fight for change. We are so busy that we learn that we survive best by treating things as tasks to complete instead of finding meaning and purpose in our work.

It is so important that we do not quench this fire in the younger generation. For me, while there was limited change I could effect when I was a junior nurse, I took that time to pick up skills and projects that could help create better meaning for nursing. I picked my battles when I was still a junior nurse, and made sure to remember the lessons I learnt, especially of what not to do, so that I could effect change when I eventually got the opportunity as I progressed in my career.

One request I have of young, emerging leaders is that as you go along your journey, pay forward everything you've learnt and trust your people.

Once you are a leader, you no longer think of yourself, you think more for the people you lead. However, as you take up more and more leadership responsibilities, also remember this - power is very addictive and it consumes you; the more you get, the more you want to protect it. I personally feel that leadership should be rotated, otherwise you will get stuck in your own world and attracted to the trappings of power. We should constantly have the humility to step back and let others take the lead, when they are the best persons to do so.

### A Nurse For Life

Sometimes I'm asked what my vision is for the future of nursing. My answer would be that the vision is yours to hold - it need not be as lofty as how

senior leaders often set it out to be. Hence, you should co-create a collective vision for yourself and your team, and then all you need to do next is believe in it!

My vision is the firm belief that nurses should put themselves in good positions to contribute more to the healthcare system and actively help to shape healthcare policies, particularly in Asia. Patients also need to see nurses as skilled and expert healthcare professionals capable of making accountable decisions.

Nursing is a lifetime calling. It takes a very special individual to become a nurse. To all nurses, I say, "thank you for being a nurse, and I hope that you will be a nurse for life."

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We should constantly have  
the humility to step back  
and let others take the lead,  
when they are the best  
persons to do so.”



**ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE  
PROFESSOR YONG KENG KWANG**  
*Group Chief Nurse,  
NHG Group Nursing,  
National Healthcare Group*

Adjunct Associate Professor Yong Keng Kwang started his career as a clinical nurse at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), Singapore, in 1996. He was subsequently promoted to Director of Nursing in October 2011 (re-designated as Chief Nurse in 2015), when he oversaw a 3,800-strong nursing workforce in the same 1,700-bedded hospital. He played key roles in leading the Nursing Division in the Hospital's quests for JCI accreditation, and nursing transformation through the Ward of the Future (2011) and Ward without Walls (2019) projects, which entrust nurses to lead the innovation and redesign of new transitional models of care to enhance patient's recovery from hospital to home/community. Keng Kwang has also invested much effort in professional development of nursing which included the establishment of Shared Governance and Governance Councils in 2013, setting up the Centre for Asian Nursing Studies (CANS) in September 2016.

Since October 2020, he has served as the Group Chief Nurse of National Healthcare Group (NHG), overseeing the development and practice of close to 8,000 nurses in the cluster of institutions under the umbrella of NHG. As the first Group Chief Nurse of NHG, he aims to further strengthen the role and competency of nurses in acute care and population health management through robust professional development, manpower optimisation, and use of appropriate technology.



A letter written by

## Adj Asst Professor Chua Chi Siong

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Throughout your leadership journey, you are bound to encounter different types of leaders.

Throughout your leadership journey, you are bound to encounter different types of leaders. You may meet leaders who appear to know it all or leaders who appear to be very confident in every decision he or she makes, who seem like they will never make a mistake.



On the contrary, leaders do not actually have all the answers. I would like to share a quote from an internationally acclaimed keynote speaker and award-winning leadership writer, Mr Tanveer Naseer, “The truth to succeeding at leadership is recognising that it is a never-ending journey of discovery and learning.” In this letter, I would like to share some of my experiences in my own leadership journey of discovery and learning.

### Leaders Need To Be Lifelong Learners

I see life as a journey where I should always be learning and growing in all areas, not just professionally but also in other aspects. When I completed my Masters of Medicine (Family Medicine), I was fortunate that the leadership of SingHealth Polyclinics sent me together with the graduating cohort of young Family Medicine registrars to attend courses such as Human Resource Management and Clinical Quality Improvement so as to broaden our insights beyond clinical skills development. Thus over the years, I continued to seek opportunities to grow in clinical expertise through fellowship training in family medicine apart from diploma courses in geriatric medicine, dermatology and palliative

medicine, as well as building up knowledge in leadership and clinical quality through courses and conferences.

After being in public primary care for almost a decade, I wanted to further my growth in the community care sector and hence joined St Luke’s Hospital. Although it took immense courage to make this decision, I am glad that I eventually followed through with it. Apart from forging new friendships, it was the place where I learned about holistic inpatient subacute and rehabilitative care through leading and harnessing the expertise of the multidisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, therapists and medical social workers.

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I see life as a journey where I should be always learning and growing in all areas, not just professionally but also in other aspects.



After three years at St Luke's Hospital, I was seconded to build the new Jurong Community Hospital then under the new JurongHealth Cluster. Initially, I felt like I was jumping into the deep end, but through this opportunity, I was also exposed to different aspects of learning such as hospital and manpower planning at much broader levels.

Through the various settings and roles that I went through, a lot of learning and growth came through the leading and involvement in various projects, from implementation of electronic prescription record system, setting up of clinical quality office, planning a hospital etc. I also realised the importance of the so-called "soft skills" - communication, trust-building and collaboration, within and across teams.

### Leaders Build Culture And Mobilise The Team

Building Jurong Community Hospital is the most mammoth task that I have been given so far. Apart from planning the infrastructure and facilities, my leadership team and myself also placed emphasis on building and training the workforce. We experienced numerous challenges during the hiring process and made mistakes, but we made sure that we do not finger-point but learn from these experiences throughout the journey.

Among the many things we need to build (hospital infrastructure, new electronic medical record system, workflows, hiring of manpower), one of the hardest to build is culture. Leaders need to role model the corporate values authentically, while always communicating and championing the behaviours that are consistent with the values.

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Leaders need to role model the corporate values authentically, while always communicating and championing the behaviours that are consistent with the values.

As patient care becomes more and more complex, and good patient outcomes require different teams within the hospital and across different settings to work well together, the leader must build trust in the workplace - trust between the team members and themselves, and trust between the team members. Only when this is achieved will the staff find the workplace a safe environment to raise their differences in opinion and highlight care gaps without fear, so that the system can be further improved.

Often, the toughest task for leaders is to mobilise people to do adaptive work when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge. After the restructuring of our public healthcare system into three clusters, we had to define and find meaning in our new roles and at the same time, help our team to adapt to the changes quickly. It is during such uncertain times that leadership is most required to be exercised, and in so doing, it helps us to hone our leadership skills further.



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Often, the toughest task for leaders is to mobilise people to do adaptive work when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge.



### Leaders Are People Developers

I view the role of leaders as people developers. Amidst the busyness, I carve out slots to spend time mentoring a few senior physicians. I realised that through the mentoring process, there are many times that sharing my own leadership experience deepen the learnings further, and there is much to learn from my mentees as well. Hence, to me, mentorship is two-way.

Leaders also should be mindful that everyone has different strengths and will choose to

grow differently. Hence, we can help our junior colleagues by delegating and providing them the opportunity to grow through different projects, while giving them appropriate amount of guidance and credit along the way.

In summary, I hope that all of us as both leaders and healthcare professionals will start to expand our network and be open to learn from one another as we continue on our leadership journeys. After all, our own lifetimes are too short to learn only through making mistakes ourselves.

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Leaders also  
should be mindful  
that everyone has  
different strengths  
and will choose to  
grow differently.”



**ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
CHUA CHI SIONG**  
*Medical Director,  
Jurong Community Hospital*

Adjunct Assistant Professor Chua Chi Siong is the Medical Director and Senior Consultant, Post-Acute and Continuing Care Department at Jurong Community Hospital (JCH), JurongHealth Campus, National University Health System (NUHS).

Adj Asst Prof Chua is also the Group Director of Institutional Care Collaborations and the Chair, Clinical Governance Board, Regional Health System Office, NUHS. In these roles, he is responsible for the development of intermediate and long-term care capabilities and collaborations in the NUHS Regional Health System (RHS) to enhance care integration and support patient care in the community, as well as strengthening of the clinical governance framework within NUHS RHS to ensure safety and quality of care.

Adj Asst Prof Chua graduated from National University of Singapore and completed his Family Medicine fellowship training with the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS). Apart from clinical and management roles, Adj Asst Prof Chua is a Family Medicine trainer and examiner at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Adj Asst Prof Chua also contributes through involvement in healthcare leadership programmes, and appointments to multiple committees at Ministry of Health (MOH) and Agency of Integrated Care (AIC). In 2019, he received the Public Administration Medal (Bronze) National Day Award.



A letter written by  
**Ms**  
**Paulin Koh**

“

To grow as a leader, we need to expand our mindsets to embrace new challenges and new perspectives. We have to learn to see things through different lenses.



As the saying goes, no leader is an island and I am grateful for the many learning opportunities and challenges that have shaped me over the years. As leadership is a collection of practices, behaviours and accumulated experiences, I would like to share with you some of my leadership insights that till today, guide me when I interact with people and make decisions as a leader.

### Develop A Growth Mindset

To grow as a leader, we need to expand our mindsets to embrace new challenges and new perspectives. We have to learn to see things through different lenses.

I remembered when one of my staff approached me with much enthusiasm for a plan to set up a hospital discharge lounge. I did not give her a chance to share more details about her plan, and my immediate response to her was that the plan would not work because of a failed experience I had with a similar plan in the past. After giving my staff such a cursory rejection, I felt bad about it. I went back to my staff and apologised for my reaction, and asked her to develop the plan further. The plan eventually turned out to be a successful and useful one which we implemented.

This experience was a good leadership lesson for me and I was glad to be proven wrong. Failure is part of the process when we try to make changes in order to progress and grow. I realised that there are certain ideas that may not work at certain times

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Failure is part of the process when we try to make changes in order to progress and grow.

or conditions but may work when the situation, environment and people change. Instead of fixing our mindsets based on our limited knowledge and past experiences, we can learn to have the courage to challenge the status quo to make things better even if we have to take some risks. With each challenge, you will gain new knowledge and experience to lead and influence your team.



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**We can learn to have the courage to challenge the status quo to make things better even if we have to take some risks.**

### **Treat People In A Respectful And Professional Manner**

In today's workplace, it is fairly common for some of our young leaders to be leading staff from different generations, who each have their own expectations and perspectives. Many young leaders often ask me how they can manage staff from different generations, as the differences can cause tensions and conflicts in the workplace.

In the early years of my career as a young leader, there were also times where my senior colleagues became my peers or staff. What worked well for me in managing these relationships, was to not treat them like I am their supervisor and they are my subordinates. Instead, regard them with respect, value their inputs and incorporate their ideas into what you do. As leaders, we can learn to eat humble pie as you will not know everything or be right all the time. Be respectful in the way you interact with them and do it in a professional manner.

How about the younger members of your team? The young generation is a generation that is eager for job opportunities at an early stage of their career. As leaders, we need to realise that expectations of career progression and growth have shifted over the years. Instead of fixating on a set of number of years for one to progress, I would like to think that each generation needs to be better than the generation before them. Borrowing a quote from John Quincy Adams, “the challenge for the leader would be to inspire the younger generation to dream more, learn more, do more

and become more”. Spend the time to understand what motivates and empowers them and leaders can do this through the 3Cs of leadership:

- Collaborative leadership where leaders cultivate values of open communication, trust and relationship building. As leaders, we model the way with words and actions. Treat your staff with kindness, be open and willing to listen and share your knowledge.
- Collective leadership where team members complement each other and different team members can be called upon to lead, depending on the task at hand.
- Courageous leadership where younger team members are encouraged to step up to lead when they have the expertise and skills to do so.

As leaders, we need to coach our young team members to be resilient as career progression does not always equate to job promotion and to look beyond present gains and challenges. Present

them with learning opportunities to grow their knowledge and hone their skills. Encourage them to invest in their own learning and the building of value they bring to the job, and support them as they scale greater heights in their career and leadership journey.

### **Be Passionate In What You Do**

In the early stages of your career, as you face simultaneous demands from building up your career and balancing other commitments such as starting a family, you may find yourself in a difficult position of either trading off one or the other. This was my dilemma many years ago when I started out as a young nurse. It is indeed a struggle as we learn to balance so many things and sometimes

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**Remember to care for yourself too, so that you can continue caring for others.**



it can be draining, leading to burnout. Even as we look out for our staff as leaders, do also be aware of your limits when you yourself need help or someone to talk to. Remember to care for yourself too, so that you can continue caring for others. I encourage you to foster a positive and optimistic mindset as a strong and effective leader. Do remember as you are working hard, don't lose that passion in what you first set out to do.

As a leader, not only do you need to find your purpose but at the same time you have to encourage and inspire your staff who have their own aspirations or challenges to deal with. Apart from communicating with them and having a better understanding of their needs, you can also look out for potential opportunities for each staff. By empowering them to act on certain parts or roles of the job, you are helping them with the skills to grow and develop. In turn, your staff will see the difference that they make in the workplace and be encouraged by their achievements and become engaged employees. Help the team to stay focus on the goals and uplift and recharge

yourselves from time to time. Together as a team, both you and your staff can strive towards achieving excellence in your workplace.

Over these many years, what has kept me going is the meaningful and purposeful work that we do in the healthcare sector. There is much that we can do or contribute to the strengthening of our healthcare system, thereby enabling better health and improving lives. Once you focus on what you set out to do, be strong and press on.

I hope that you will all find the passion, purpose and meaning in the work you do.

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As a leader, not only do you need to find your purpose but at the same time you have to encourage and inspire your staff who have their own aspirations or challenges to deal with.



**MS PAULIN KOH**  
Chief Nursing Officer,  
Ministry of Health

Ms Paulin Koh is the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) at Ministry of Health (MOH), Singapore.

As CNO, she provides leadership and strategic direction for the development of Nursing and its services at the national level and works with various agencies and healthcare clusters on the development of nursing roles and services, policies, workforce development, training, and education matters. Concurrently, she is also the Registrar of the Singapore Nursing Board, which licences and regulates nursing, midwifery practice and education.

Prior to assuming the CNO role in July 2020, Ms Koh was holding concurrent appointments as the Chief Nurse of Changi General Hospital (CGH) and Deputy Group Chief Nurse, SingHealth. She had been instrumental in starting Community Nursing service at CGH, which is supported by the MOH Regional Health System (RHS)-led Community Nursing pilot program. She chaired the MOH National Nursing Taskforce (NNT) Community Nursing Subgroup and Workgroup on Development of Competency Framework where she played a pivotal role in shaping the strategic direction and recommendations on the practice settings, roles and competencies of Community Nurses in Singapore.



A letter written by

# Professor Eugene Fidelis Soh

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I am heartened to see our young leaders work as a collective, transcending their professional groups with their shared purpose of making a difference.

I am amazed by how you are changing healthcare for the better. It has been a privilege and joy to journey with you and see your leadership in action not only at our frontlines during this pandemic but also in forging ahead with new ideas and technologies. I am heartened to see our young leaders work as a collective, transcending their professional groups with their shared purpose of making a difference.



The last two years of the pandemic has disrupted your professional development, increased your workload and reduced social activities. It has not been easy and you have shown tenacity, resilience and most of all, dedication. This baptism of fire holds invaluable lessons and shared experience that will build your foundation to create a new and better health system in the years ahead.

I wish to share with you the stories of three amazing young leaders who have taught me much. They have gone beyond their comfort zones and made sacrifices to contribute to the larger good. They take on new challenges and yet keep the flame burning as to the changes they aspire to see in healthcare. I hope that their stories will inspire you as they have inspired me.



(Clockwise, Starting from the top) Jia Xiang, Zenne Tng, Dr Eugene Soh, and James Ang

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I wish to share with you the stories of three amazing young leaders who have taught me much.



## Collective Leadership As Seen By James Ang

Dear James,

I have watched you grow as a young nurse, brought into nursing leadership, ventured into innovation and now changing healthcare in crisis and for a better normal. In 2020, we were thick in the pandemic, and I wanted to give every nurse a token of our support for Nurses' Day. I asked if you would design a mask for our nurses at TTSH-NCID to show our solidarity with Singapore in our fight against COVID-19. Your drawing of a healthcare worker in PPE donning gloves now stands as a symbol of our fight at TTSH-NCID.

Your illustrations depicted the fight at our frontlines, and captured the emotions of what must have been a never-ending roller-coaster ride. It gave us insights into the personal struggles of our healthcare workers and the strength of being together facing the crisis. The raw emotions portrayed speak louder than words. 2020 has been a life-changing experience. Yet, 2021 has also been an encore.

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Your illustrations depicted the fight at our frontlines, and captured the emotions of what must have been a never-ending roller-coaster ride.

I particularly enjoyed your series on our setting up of the screening centre at NCID. To operationalise the screening centre by the next day, our staff swarmed from all over the hospital to converge on the newly built facility. They came from different units and were unfamiliar with one another. Yet, they spoke a common language that inspired trust and bonded around a shared duty. I loved how the illustrations captured their emotions, trials and tribulations and also, the defining moments where staff stepped up to move things forward together.

Dear James, thank you for stepping up to the frontlines and sharing your unique perspective of the collective leadership through your eyes and your art.



Illustrations by James Ang





### FLYING For The Future With Zenne Tng

Dear Zenne,

When I first met you, you struck me as a young leader set to change the world. I have seen your journey from a young speech therapist to the head of your department. You knew that leadership was not as much a choice than a duty to your fellow colleagues. You have strengthened your department, and started a journey to lead change with our Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI). You seized opportunities to interact with thought leaders in healthcare innovation from around the world. I saw a growing spark in you to ensure that other young leaders have the opportunity to do so as well.

Our schools are organised by professional disciplines, hence, many young leaders feel uncomfortable to connect across professional lines. Together with a group of dedicated young leaders from various healthcare professions, you saw the need for young leaders to share and learn together. The group created opportunities to connect with thought leaders from the likes of Peter Senge, Goran Hendriks and Jonathon Gray.



Throughout the pandemic, the group brought more young leaders on board and saw the launch of FLYING - Future Leaders & Young Innovators Guild at CHI in April 2021; a community of practice of young leaders assembled like the Avengers. As a Guild, these young leaders are bonded by a common goal to change healthcare for the better.

Dear Zenne and young leaders, thank you for teaching me how to fly in a flock!

### CHILLing Out Of The Box With Jia Xiang

Dear Jia Xiang,

It was a leap of faith when you joined us four years ago as a service designer following your scholarship with the Design Singapore Council. It was an adventure as the idea of design thinking in healthcare then was relatively new. You saw the potential to make a difference in transforming healthcare through Service Design to drive user-centered innovations. Your efforts saw you set up and manage the Centre for Healthcare Innovation Living Lab (CHILL), a healthcare design and prototyping workshop to co-create solutions with our professionals. This is the first design lab to be embedded in a hospital with ease of access by clinicians and hospital staff. Your early co-design efforts saw our hospital represent healthcare in its first foray into the Singapore Design Week 2019.

When COVID-19 hit our shores in 2020, you developed an early rapid prototype based on a



With Jia Xiang at Singapore Design Week 2019

conversation you had with Dr Shawn Vasoo at National Centre for Infectious Diseases, to design better eye protection for our staff. This saw the introduction of face shields that could address the discomfort and fogging from prolonged goggle use. The product saw a take up by Siemens and

*Prof Eugene Fidelis Sob*



is now in mass production. This early success sparked off many other conversations on ground up innovations with clinicians to better address our pandemic response needs. From surgical suction adaptor to enhance safety during aerosol-generating procedures to safe dining pods for staff, these designs have lived on to make an impact in our pandemic response.

It was your aspiration to lead with other young leaders to change healthcare. You stepped out of your comfort zone as a service designer and embarked on the healthcare management fellowship programme. I admire the journey and the uncharted path you have taken as a service designer and now as a management fellow with the hospital.

You shared that the mandarin word for crisis, 危机, comprises two characters that represent dangers

and opportunities. While COVID-19 has disrupted our lives and how the hospital delivers care, it has gifted us a new way of doing things differently. Dear Jia Xiang, thank you for taking us out of the box and seeing the opportunities in crisis.

It has been a huge privilege working with James, Zenne and Jia Xiang. They are changing healthcare for tomorrow today and, like many young leaders throughout our health system.

I wish to share with you an e-publication - Braving through COVID-19 as a Kampung. It compiles many wonderful stories by young leaders who have stepped forward during this pandemic. I have enjoyed my co-learning with them and am glad to have our young leaders with us in our collective leadership. We are here for you and with you.

Thank you, Young Leaders!



Scan QR Code  
to view the  
booklet



**PROFESSOR EUGENE FIDELIS SOH**  
MBBS (S'pore) MPH (Harvard)

Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer,  
Integrated Care,  
National Healthcare Group

Chief Executive Officer,  
Tan Tock Seng Hospital & Central Health

Adjunct Professor,  
LKC Medicine (NTU - Imperial College London)

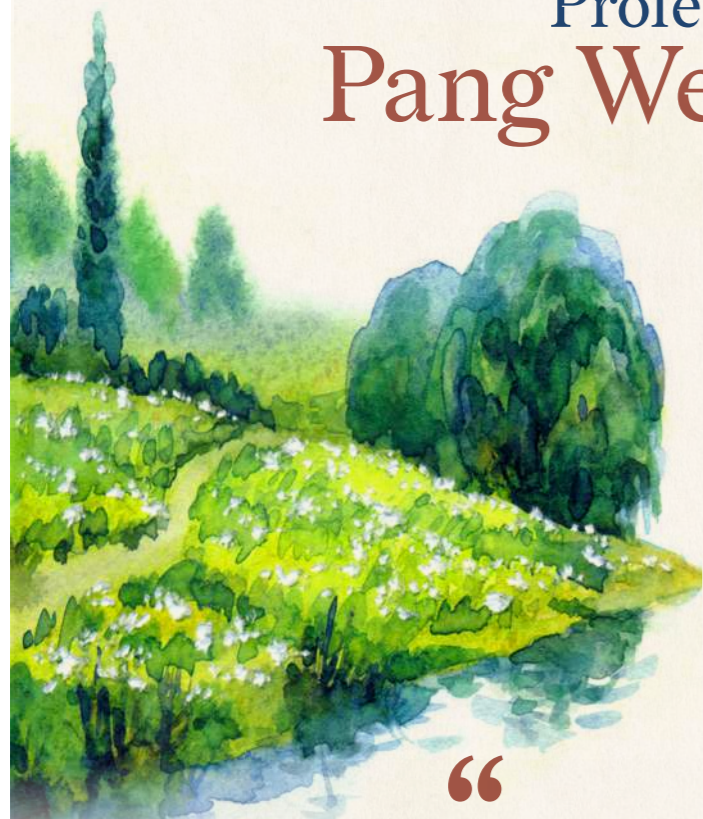
Chairman,  
Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI)  
Co-Learning Network

Lead,  
HealthCity Novena Master Plan 2030 & Beyond  
NHG Leadership & Organisational Development

Professor Eugene serves in various leadership roles in public healthcare. He contributes to the development of population health systems, integrated care, hospital management and healthcare innovation. His passion is in people, which drives his work in leadership and organisational development at NHG and TTSH. He believes in building collective leadership to drive systems change. Working with young leaders over the last decade, he has set up and continues to sponsor the management development programme at NHG and TTSH.



A letter written by  
**Professor**  
**Pang Weng Sun**



“

I have no doubt that many disciplines grew in similar fashion nationwide - committed clinicians paved the way to create departments and expanded their disciplines in various hospitals and specialist centres.

In my medical officer and registrar years, I had the privilege of working under inspirational senior clinicians who led me beyond clinical practice to service development and nurturing the next generation. Their hearts and minds were not merely department nor hospital centric, but always had the perspective of a wider healthcare service. When the Outpatient Dispensaries (OPDs, before Polyclinics were built) were overloaded during

flu outbreaks, we were sent out to help. When smaller hospitals were short of staff, we were rotated to provide cover. When MOH saw the need to develop geriatric services, a medical unit in TTSH was converted into a geriatric medicine department and an active plan was conceived to develop services across the clusters.

I have no doubt that many disciplines grew in similar fashion nationwide - committed clinicians paved the way to create departments and expanded their disciplines in various hospitals and specialist centres. Many of these continue to collaborate, whether in service, education or research; and the COVID-19 situation in the past year has shown that our health care services, both public and private, can work together.

Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909), an American historian, minister and writer, wrote the story “Ten Times One is Ten” - about a fictitious character Henry who influenced ten others, each of whom in turn influenced another ten. 27 years later,

the figure reached one thousand million... Their philosophy? “Look up and not down, Look forward and not back, Look out and not in, Lend a Hand”. The simple approach in this story inspired several charitable groups in real life.

In developing leaders for healthcare, we need to see the impact multiplying across the nation in the long-term. My predecessor Prof Aymeric Lim has done a wonderful job in starting the College from scratch and together with the team established courses targeted at leaders in different stages of their development. The support from both MOH

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In developing leaders for healthcare, we need to see the impact multiplying across the nation in the long-term.



and the clusters' leadership have been strong and we are thankful for their trust and confidence in the College.

Across our different milestone programmes, the College has held to these three core pillars: Leadership Competencies; Healthcare Policies; and Values. The focus on leadership competencies is obvious for any institution that focuses on developing leaders. Values have formed the bedrock of the College's curriculum since its first days.

Why learn about Policies? Anthony Mayo of the Harvard Business School writes: "It is not only who you are, but when and where you are." Leadership can neither be exercised nor make meaning in a vacuum. The larger environment and policies determine the situations and contexts in which leaders operate, and it is that interaction between the leader's leadership characteristics and behaviours, and the environment that he or she is in which determines success.

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**No matter how good the content of the milestone programmes is, we need the right people, in the right programmes, at the right time, and for the right reasons, so that they will be able to make a real difference and achieve the higher mission and outcomes for the larger healthcare ecosystem.**

One important shift that the College has made in recent years is to move away from focusing mainly on the curriculum and content of the milestone programmes, towards focusing more on the people and leaders. No matter how good the content of the milestone programmes is, we need the right people, in the right programmes, at the right time, and for the right reasons, so that they will be able to make a real difference and achieve the higher mission and outcomes for the larger healthcare ecosystem.

The College marks its 10th anniversary this year, 2022. It remains for us to live up to the aspiration expressed in the story "Ten Times One is Ten".

What lies ahead for the College? Can we better add value in our work of developing future leaders for healthcare? How do we build bridges and strengthen community among healthcare leaders?

As we step into our next ten years, HLC will hold fast to its mission to support and develop good leaders, who in turn influence and grow other leaders, and collectively have a far larger impact and reach than what the College can do on its own. Together, we can build a strong and large community of healthcare leaders to steer Singapore's healthcare system into the future. To more good years ahead!



**PROFESSOR PANG WENG SUN**  
Dean, Healthcare Leadership College,  
MOH Holdings

Vice-Dean (Clinical Affairs),  
Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine

Senior Consultant,  
Geriatric Medicine,  
Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

Senior Advisor,  
Geriatric Education and Research Institute

Professor Pang Weng Sun is the current Dean of Healthcare Leadership College. He has been Vice-Dean (Clinical Affairs) at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, a joint partnership between Nanyang Technological University and Imperial College London since 2011. He was formerly Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Population Health) in the National Healthcare Group (2017-21). He also formerly served as Executive Director, Geriatric Education and Research Institute (2015-19) and continues as Senior Advisor. He had previously completed two terms from 2005 to 2011 as Chairman, Medical Board of Alexandra/Khoo Teck Puat Hospitals.

Prof Pang is a senior consultant in geriatric medicine at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and has contributed geriatric expertise to various community services and worked with the Ministry of Health and various voluntary agencies in eldercare and palliative care. He was a recipient of the Healthcare Humanity Award (2005), Public Administration Medal Silver (2012), National Outstanding Clinician Educator (2016) and National Healthcare Group Lifetime Achievement Award (2019).



# 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 public healthcare system, in line with the Ministry of Health's vision and strategic priorities.

We aspire to be a keystone and trusted partner in developing leaders of and for Singapore healthcare, and in building bridges and growing community across agencies, clusters, institutions and professions in the Singapore healthcare ecosystem.

We develop leaders of and for Singapore healthcare through efforts including the design and delivery of high quality programmes and other learning and engagement platforms, with emphasis on the following strategic priorities:

- 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 to bring about greater collaboration and sharing, and inspiration to the next generation of leaders

# THE HLC JOURNEY

## 2012

HLC is set up and takes over the running of programmes originally run by MOH - the nursing leadership programmes, the Leadership and Policy Perspectives (LPP) programme and the Healthcare Policy and Governance (HPG) programme.

## 2014

HLC launches the Nursing & Allied Health Leadership Programme (NALP), and runs the inaugural Global Health Leaders Forum (GHLF).

## 2016

HLC launches the Distinguished Speaker Series (DSS) on leadership insights for the healthcare family.

## 2018

HLC launches the Leaders for Singapore Healthcare (LSH) programme for senior C-suite leaders. HLC re-brands its Milestone Leadership Programmes to the New Leaders Programme (NLP), Igniting Leaders Programme (ILP) and Effective Leaders Programme (ELP).

## 2020

HLC accelerates its digital transformation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, offering programmes fully online and blended formats.

## 2013

HLC launches the Emerging Leaders Programme (ELP), Strategic Leaders Programme (SLP), and the Singapore Chief Residency Programme (SCRCP).

## 2015

HLC launches the Policy Insight Series (PIS), now known as Healthcare Policy Series (HPS).

## 2017

HLC launches the Leading Healthcare newsletter, and re-organises its short programmes under a consolidated Alumni Engagement Programme.

## 2019

HLC launches the Singapore Nurse Leaders Programme (SNLP).

## 2022

HLC celebrates 10 years since it was founded, marking the year with celebratory learning events and the special anniversary publication, *Growing Leaders*.

# THE TEAM



From left: Ms Goh You Li, Ms Reina Goh, Ms Carol Tang, Ms Regine Tan, Ms Chia Li Hui, Mr Dennis Loh, Prof Pang Weng Sun, Dr Edwin Low



From left: Ms Sandra Choong, Ms Jennie Tan, Ms Maryse Koh, Ms Pacllia Ng, Mr Jared Koh, Ms Yvonne Soh, Ms Chu Min Lian, Ms Lee Shiao Wei, Ms Pereira Kathlyn Therese, Ms Nicole Lee

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HEALTHCARE  
LEADERSHIP  
COLLEGE



**10**

**YEARS OF GROWING LEADERS**

- ESTABLISHED IN 2012 -

