

By Dr Tan Yia Swam, Deputy Editor

The Secret Diary of Madam See Bay Suay

Month 1 Day 1:

Just came back from the polyclinic. My daughter asked me to go for health screening, so I go lor. The doctor looked very young, I think my grandson is older than him! He keep asking me if I have any past medical problems- how I know? Then he keep asking if I'm 72 or 70 years old - I tell him depends on whether use the *ang moh* or chinese way of calculating lah, then he got very impatient, tell me: "Nevermind, nevermind" very loudly. Kena blood taken, so painful! I scolded the nurse, I say no need, the doctor already check my blood pressure, but she say must, the blood is to check different thing. Whatever lah. Poke 3 times then find, I heard her say under her breath I too fat! Where got? Old already mah, 8 children, how to stay slim and pretty? No common sense, these young people.

Month 1 Day 3:

Got a call from polyclinic - say my cholesterol very high, must take medicine. I say, how can? I eat so little, only 3 meals a day, how can be high cholesterol? Morning eat only porridge with 2 salted eggs and some pork liver. Lunch depends lah, maybe curry with those fried crispy bits. Dinner nothing much lah, but my daughter very good, always buy back some prawn or crab or abalone once a week. Then maybe some peanuts while watching TV. The medicine supposed to take at night, so I drink water to help swallow it. Lucky small pill. I hate taking medicine. Hope I can remember to take everyday.

Month 1 Day 21:

Went back for repeat blood tests. This time different doctor. A girl, even younger than that boy. She got very worried at my liver test, say very abnormal. Told me to go specialist clinic to get scan. I asked her why, she gave me a long talk but I cannot remember. Something about stone in liver, cancer, infection. Wah, so many things wrong ah?

I also asked her why I'm passing urine so much nowadays, this doctor very kind, recommends I go see more specialists - the woman specialist and the urine specialist. Something about my womb dropping out - aiye, so scary. I told her the lump has been there for many years already, but she say maybe urine getting stuck. She also say maybe got stones. I very confused, how can there be stones inside? Stones in urine and in liver? So *suay meh?*

Month 2 Day 5:

Waited 2 weeks for the stupid specialist appointment, and the specialist doctor is another young punk. The name on the door says "Medical Officer". Such a strange name for a Chinese man. I thought can get the scan immediately, but he say must get appointment from outside. So confusing, the hospital so big! Went to the counter, then counter ask me to go Level 2, Level 2 say they do only CT scan, my test is an ultrasound so must go to B1. Aiyah, wasted the whole day on this silly thing! Must come back again next week for the scan.

Dr Tan is having a quarter-life crisis. Not being able to afford a Ferrarri or quit her job to travel round the world, she is taking time out from her job and tries to better define her goals in life. The Prada handbag is still beyond her finances now that she no longer does night calls, but at least she has more time to window shop.

Month 2 Day 19:

So angry! Came to do the scan, but the doctor say I didn't fast, so cannot do. I scolded him, so he finally did, but say it is suboptimal. Suboptimal his head lah - he specialist, do the scan very difficult is it? I asked him how's the results, but he say I need to go back to clinic to get, *aiyoh!* Must wait another week!

Month 2 Day 28:

Wah!!! Today waited 2 hours to see the specialist. Very odd, the name is also "Medical Officer", but this time is a young Indian girl. She say I got stones in the gallbladder. I ask so how? She said many things for 15 minutes, very confusing. I asked her if I need operation, she say up to me. I scolded her - I come to see specialist is to get specialist advice what - you ask me to decide, might as well don't see doctor right? She blushed, and told me must weigh pros and cons and understand risks, don't know what lah. Haiyah, wasted so much time on this stupid thing already, just get it over and done with, so I told her to do operation today. Her assistant laughed (laughed!) and told me must get date. Walau! I am so angry! I shouted at the doctor and say I don't want, but then she say maybe the stone can get stuck and cause "yellowing" and fever, or burst something - don't know what. I so scared, so nevermind lah, I wait for operation lah. Meanwhile, better eat more because in future cannot eat oily food anymore.

Month 3 Day 25:

Finally home after one week! After that kueh, vomitted at night, and kena the tube placed in through nose. Can die ah. I kept telling the boy I don't have stroke, I don't need, then he called an older boy to talk to me. *Aiyah*, whatever lah. Since I'm in hospital, I'm at their mercy. I just follow. Everyday keep telling me to walk, wear those stupid socks. How to walk with the drip? And the railing is up all the time - want me to climb out is it?

Anyway, made it home alive. Supposed to go for review a few weeks later. Hope don't have to wait so long like last time.

Month 3 Day 15:

Finally day of operation! Hope can eat dinner. Very hungry. Never eat from last night. Don't know how long I have to wait for my operation. Everyone keeps telling me later, later. *Aiyah!* I forgot to see the other specialists. Too worried about this operation. Nevermind lah. I think no need lah. Now in hospital I don't take my cholestrol medicine anymore, because they never give me. I think after gallbladder gone, the fat not absorbed, so my high cholestrol will be cured. Strangely, I don't pee in the night anymore. Stay hospital good ah, can cure so many problems.

I cannot tahan, must steal something. Maybe from the ah-mah next door - don't know why she gets biscuits and milo when she obviously cannot eat. Even I can see she kena stroke so badly, she's curled up in bed all day and only drink milk through the tube. Hmm... the biscuit very dry, and the milo very sweet. Nice.

Month 3 Day 15: - later

Giddy. Painful. Kena conned. What keyhole surgery... is one big long cut! Waited so long in the cold operating room because they say I drink milo, so must postpone. Cannot remember what happen, only the funny smell of the plastic mask, then I woke up vomitting. Argh.

Month 3 Day 17:

Too ill to write yesterday. Today the pain better but I scared if I move, the wound burst open. Very hungry, I want to eat - my daughter bought my favourite kueh for me, but the nurse say doctor say I haven't passed gas yet, cannot eat. So I ate secretly. Those tight socks very itchy. I take them off when no one is looking. Hmm. Maybe the kueh was bad idea. Feeling bloated now.