

By Dr Tan Yia Swam

The Very **Secret** Diary of Miss Kan Chiong Gui

Month 1 Day 1:

Glad that Mum finally went for the health screening package after nagging at her for ages. Couldn't go with her for it because busy at work. She came back in a foul mood, and complained that the nurse didn't know how to take blood. I'm sorry she had to be poked so many times, but I guess no choice, my doctor friend did tell me before, old peoples' veins are harder to take blood from usually. Will try to pacify her. Will buy her favourite chilli crab for dinner later.

Month 1 Day 3:

Mum said she has high cholesterol, and needs to start on medication. Couldn't go with her for checkup because busy at work. Poor Mum, whining about the pill and how hard it was to swallow. I asked her to drink more water to wash it down. I hope there's nothing wrong, like throat cancer – why should she find the tablet hard to swallow? What if like my friend got thyroid cancer – died within a few months! Must remind Mum to get scope and check thyroid.

Month 1 Day 21:

Mum went for polyclinic checkup again today. Came back with really confusing story. Couldn't go with her for it because busy at work. She said she was told that she has stones in the liver, kidney and womb. I have not heard of stones in the womb, she must be confused. She also said there may be cancer but don't know where! Anyway, she has several specialist appointments to go for. Will try to go with her, though I doubt it. I'm worried there's something wrong, what if she has cancer?

Month 2 Day 5:

Oh dear – couldn't go with Mum for liver specialist checkup because busy at work. But sounds like nothing much was done! Anyway, it was just the medical officer who saw her. Mum was fuming mad when she got home. Said she walked around the whole hospital getting a scan appointment. Strange, how come? I thought the hospitals are all now computerised? Making old people walk around, so poor thing! Lucky Mum still in pretty good shape, maybe just a bit chubby.

Month 2 Day 19:

Mum blew her top again today. Apparently she had to twist the arm of the doctor into doing the scan. I'm puzzled too – I thought she had an appointment, but anyway. Mum said that she was supposed to have fasted but no one told her. I checked through her forms and actually, there was a line there, in bold, highlighted and circled, to remind patients to fast. Shucks. I feel bad now – should have helped her, but too busy with work. Well, it's done. I hope it's nothing serious. I'm still worried it's the big C.



Dr Tan has resolved her quarter-life crisis. No need for sportscars or branded handbags. A perfect day is one spent enjoying the sunset on a beach, in the company of that special someone. Having a martini and/or a margarita as well would be heavenly.

Month 2 Day 28

Now my turn to get angry! I cannot understand why Mum just agreed to go for an operation simply because the doctor asked her to! I should have been with her, but something came up at work. Tried the whole day to contact the doctor, but keep getting directed to various administrative staff and nurses. I guess it must be a keyhole surgery to remove gallstones; Jane at work just had hers done. Fantastic. Just an overnight stay, and she was back home the next day. Well, sounds simple enough, what could possibly go wrong? Lucky it wasn't cancer. But not sure if they checked properly. I think Mum needs a CT scan.

Month 3 Day 15

Been trying to contact Mum's doctor over the past 2 weeks, but unsuccessful. Finally managed to come with her to hospital to speak to him before the surgery. Disappointed though – I finally realise why Mum was complaining that doctors nowadays are too young! There was a group of 4 who came, and said they work in a team, though the overall-in-charge was this senior doctor who was busy and couldn't see my Mum. I guess it's alright, but the 4 of them look like they could be my kids!

The oldest one, who looks like he's in his early 20s, took the time to explain everything in detail, which I appreciate, though I have forgotten most of it by now. But it sounded okay at the time. Anyway, it should be a quick 2 hours, then I'll come back later in the evening to visit her after the surgery

Month 3 Day 15- later

Poor Mum! The keyhole surgery failed, and she had a huge bandage on the tummy. I dread to think how long the scar is. Also, I came back in the evening and waited for ages before I saw her, and no one seems to know why. I don't know why the operation failed. Maybe they found cancer? The young man on night duty seemed very blur and in such a terrible rush, I wanted to ask him so much more, but his Nokia phone kept going off. Strange, I thought there would be more doctors on shift, but he told me despairingly that there's only him looking after 2 wards of patients. So poor thing one ah? Well, at least he's working only night shift. I told him that, but he just laughed maniacally and ran away. Not bad ah, so busy can still be so joyful. Being a doctor not easy.

Month 3 Day 17

Mum looks great today, maybe just a bit woozy still, though I'm reassured it's from the anaesthesia. Got one of the team doctors to explain everything to me – not bad, she showed me the photos from the operation, and the small stones. I keep asking her if it's cancer, she says it's not, but need to wait for final report. Oh dear. I keep telling her, if it is, please tell me, but she says need to wait. I don't think I can take this suspense for so long!

Bought Mum some kueh to eat. Fasted for 2 days already, must eat lah, I think she lost a lot of weight. Maybe she really has cancer. I am so frightened, but must not let Mum know.

Month 3 Day 25

Finally home after a week's stay. Terrible, I told the doctors should let her stay until completely well, because old people take longer to recover. They say she is ready. I brought her back only because Mum wants to come home. There's no one at home to look after her, what can I do? Already took leave for 5 days, my boss is going to kill me! Must go back to work tomorrow.

Must convince her to stay at home and rest, not go walking about. Lucky she made it home alive. Supposed to go for review a few weeks later, to get the final report. I am still worried that she has cancer. Maybe will call the hospital later to ask if can bring forward appointment.