

Eulogy for Dr Lim Cheng Hong - Father of Nephrology

By Prof Woo Keng Thye



Dr Lim Cheng Hong breathed life into kampong Nephrology in the early 70s through his fashioning of the rudiments of Nephrology when the world (of Nephrology) was still not quite moulded. Then, Nephrology as a science was practiced in parts of the world where the service was available only as a fledgling subspecialty of Internal Medicine. He pioneered the development of Dialysis and Renal Transplantation in 1973 when he founded the Department of Renal Medicine at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH). He also developed Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD) in 1980. Today he leaves behind a lasting legacy of Nephrological Practice in Singapore comparable to many overseas Centres of Excellence in Nephrology through the number of nephrologists he has trained these past three decades and more. The Nephrology Service in Singapore is now available in four restructured hospitals and in all private hospitals.

Indeed, Dr Lim has been a giant in many ways, apart from his physical stature, literally and otherwise. He has enjoyed a fine reputation in the surrounding Asian Pacific Region where he helped to develop Nephrology in the region through his contribution in the Asian Colloquium and the Asian Pacific Society of Nephrology, both of which he was also a founding member.

For Dr Lim's pioneering role as the Father of Nephrology in Singapore, SGH and the Department of Renal Medicine honoured him with a Festschrift on 26 September 1996.

Dr Lim was the Founding President of the Singapore Society of Nephrology (SSN). On the evening of 28 November 1972, Dr Lim Cheng Hong together with Prof Khoo Oon Teik held the inaugural meeting at the Brunel Hawes Lecture Theatre at Medical Unit II in Bowyer Block of the old SGH. Since that meeting, the SSN has flourished and at its height, hosted the World Congress in Nephrology in Singapore in 2005, which put Singapore on the world map in Nephrology.

Four years ago, the SSN honoured Dr Lim by establishing the Lim Cheng Hong Lecture. On 18 September 2010, the SSN held the 4th Lim Cheng Hong Lecture, delivered by Prof Chan Choong Meng, the present Head of Department of Renal Medicine.

Dr Lim was no stranger to corporate administration. When Dr Kwa Soon Bee was Chairman, Dr Lim served as Deputy Chairman of the Hospital Planning Committee which built the present SGH. Dr Lim has also served as Chairman of numerous committees in the Ministry of Health, SGH, Academy of Medicine, and the National University of Singapore. His last appointment before his retirement was as the First Chairman of the Division of Medicine at SGH. This year, the Division is celebrating its 21st anniversary. The success the Division of Medicine enjoys today is due in large measure to the meticulous planning and foresight of Dr Lim, as he had steered it in the right direction in its formative years.

Dr Lim has been very dear to me. He

trained and nurtured me. He was my Teacher and Mentor and taught me much about life, especially during the various overseas meetings we attended together through the years. Beneath his stern demeanour, he has always had a kind and warm heart. Dr Lim was a very caring Head. He took very good care of all his staff and always had a listening ear for their problems.

At home, Dr Lim has also been a very devoted husband, father and grandfather. In his Eulogy to his Dad, Dr Lim's son, Dr Lim Ka Liang, said that his Dad enjoyed a good quality of life and he had a good death. During the past year, he had made many trips abroad to London, Tokyo, Penang, Kunming and most recently, London again. He had passed away peacefully in his sleep with his family by his side without any pain, at the age of 80 on 2 September 2010. As Ka Liang related, his Dad was not only his Dad but also his Best Friend. They enjoyed Sunday breakfast at Alexandra Village together for years. His favourite was

fish porridge. Occasionally, for a change they would eat roti prata at Casuarina at Upper Thomson Road. After breakfast, they would take a long drive to see what had changed in Singapore.

Dr Lim was among the last of a great generation which made Singapore what it is today. Even as we mourn his passing, we must celebrate the seasons of his life for what he has achieved through his service to the nation, as the Father of Nephrology in Singapore and for his role at home as a devoted husband, father and doting grandfather.

As we grieve with Dr Lim's family, with his beloved wife and daughter Yue Li, even as we love him and miss him dearly, we will find strength in the fond memories we all have of him which will always remain within our hearts. **SMA**



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Photo taken at Dr Lim's Festschrift in 1996, showing Prof Foong W C and Prof Chan K T