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Alvernia

Inspiring Healthy Living



Living The Moment

Inspiration and Motivation from our Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM)

It's love at first sight... we see it everyday.

Meeting your newborn for the first time is one of the most precious moments of parenthood.



54 years
of providing the best
care possible for
mothers-to-be and
their precious
newborns

At Mount Alvernia Hospital, we are here to support you through all the stages of pregnancy, childbirth and after delivery care. Our patient-centred maternity experience help new mothers recuperate with total peace-of-mind while nurses from Parentcraft Centre are always available to give advice on newborn baby care.

**For a tour of our maternity rooms and facilities,
please call 6347 6788 or email us at
patientassist@mtalvernia-hospital.org**

The first quarter of 2015 has been bittersweet. We joined the nation to mourn the passing of our nation's founding father and a great leader of our times, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. For our pioneer FMDM Sisters and staff, a memory to treasure is that of Mr Lee gracing the opening of our new hospital extension in 1965 and again in 1971. Mr Lee provided a safe and stable environment which enabled our Sisters to focus on the mission - from nursing the sick, to training nurses, to caring for tuberculosis patients and to building Mount Alvernia Hospital from the ground up. Let us always remember our nation's founding father as one of our benefactors and to those who sought him for help. It is an honour to be able to continue this heritage of community service and our mission to serve all with love.

We are privileged to have strong relationships with our community partners who constantly show us new pathways that further our mission and expand our outreach. Since January, our people have turned out at various health screening outreach events. More than 1,000 people have been screened at outreach events organized by various religious organization; both local and overseas.

During the past quarter, we also established two new community partnerships that have allowed us to expand our community engagement. The first partnership is with the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE). Through them, we brought health screening to the residents at Pertapis Halfway Houses. We hope that by providing each resident with their own personal health report, this will add to their confidence and give them greater impetus to build back their health and make their way back into society.

The second partnership is with the Yusof Ishak Professorship (YIP) Fund at the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Social Sciences. The fund was set up last year to benefit research into multi-racialism and multi-culturalism. This is much needed as Singapore aspires to be a regional hub for development work which is attracting foreign talent to work and live here.

4th March was our hospital's 54th anniversary and we wanted to celebrate it meaningfully in keeping with our mission to serve and bring life to the community. Thus, we held a get-together for staff, doctors and management, and launched a fund-raising campaign for YIP which resonates with the hospital's core values and spirit of treating everyone - staff, patients, their families and visitors or vendors - with the same respect, dignity and compassion.

To celebrate our nation and our hospital's diversity, we showed up for work that morning in vibrant and colourful ethnic attire for a mass walk. Some of us even donned outfits of another culture; a heartwarming gesture of inclusion and literally put themselves in the shoes of another person. Mount Alvernia Hospital is now officially in the Singapore Book of Records for setting a new record for the "Largest Mass Walk In Ethnic Attire" with a total of 355 participants.

At Mount Alvernia Hospital, we practise a continuous improvement work culture where each department makes a conscious effort to identify and implement proven patient care services while at the same time, exploring various service innovation options to improve patients' experience.

The efforts paid off as we joined the list of winners at the Singapore Health Quality Service Award (SHQSA) 2015 ceremony held in January. 83 of our staff received an award: 3 for the star award, 4 for the gold award and 76 for the silver award. These special winners see healthcare through the eyes of their patients and families. Their professional skills coupled with caring hearts are as attested by testimonials of acts of going the extra-mile in the service of others and the number of compliments they received.

As with any new year, there will always be many firsts. However, we value first and foremost our patients; their safety, their recovery and their dignity. Thank you for believing in our mission and entrusting your care to us for more than 50 years as we seek to Serve All with Love!



Mr Lee Suen Ming
Chief Executive Officer



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**Letters To Dr Ang Geok Lian,
Health Screening Physician**



Q Is it ok for pregnant mothers to do an ultrasound scan during every visit? Do ultrasound scans affect the foetus?

Ultrasound scans are generally considered safe for the developing foetus. Studies have found no links between scans and birthweights/ cancers/ dyslexia. The obstetrician will scan you according to the pregnancy schedule and may order additional scans or blood tests if any complications are detected.

Q When should women go for mammogram or PAP smear test?

Yearly PAP smears should be done for all sexually active women, regardless of age. Mammograms can be done after the age of 40, unless there is a family history of breast cancer, in which case screening mammograms can start before age 40.

If there is no significant family history of cancer or early heart disease, we encourage females under 30 years old to go for health screening every two years, yearly PAP smears and monthly breast self-examinations. However, generally, a health screening is suggested for adults over 30 years old.

Q No one in our family is diabetic. However my aunt's recent health screening report showed high sugar level. She went for a retest a week later and her sugar level is normal. Which report is more accurate. Should she go for another test to be sure?

Your aunt with the high sugar level probably had a fasting sugar test done. I generally will not advise a patient to do another fasting sugar test 1 week later. In this case, it is clear that she will need to do an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) to check whether she is diabetic or pre-diabetic. She will also need to do a HbA1c to assess the average blood sugar level for the past 3 months. Diabetes is so prevalent in Singapore and its complications are potentially so serious that proper diagnosis with an OGTT test is advised. A confirmed diabetic may have no known family history of diabetes.

Q Can children do health screening?

Children can, of course, have health screening, especially if they show symptoms of weight loss, lethargy, excessive urination, excessive bruising etc. However the disease profile of children is quite different from adults. Some of these symptoms such as weight loss or lethargy might be due to stress in school. The screening physician should also do a quick screen for Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia or even mental stress problems which are becoming more prevalent in Singapore because of the competitive school environment.

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Eat Safely

Singapore is a food haven. You get all kinds of food here – starting from the famous Chilli Crab and Chicken Rice to fine cuisines of France and Italy to large American burgers to gastronomic Asian delights of Vietnamese Pho and Thai Pineapple Rice.

While the nutritional advice is to eat healthy and eat well, this year's World Health Day called for Eating Safely.

Before your food lands on your plate, it came through the entire length of the food chain in a globalised world, from production and transport, to preparation before consumption. While the message is directed to food producers to be ethical and responsible in handling food, the same message is a reminder to us as consumers to be aware of sources of food, food preparation methods, read labels on food packaging, become familiar with common food hazards and safe food handling practices.



So Eat Healthy. Eat Well. Eat Safely.

Water is Nutrition

Water is the body's principal chemical component and every system in the body needs water. Water flushes toxins out of vital organs, carries nutrients to body cells, and provides a moist environment for ear, nose and throat tissues.

But every day the body loses water through breathing, perspiration, urine and bowel movements. For the body to function properly, remember to consume beverages and foods that contain water to keep hydrated and to replenish the body's water supply.



Kampong Assisi

It is time to block your calendar for the Assisi Hospice Charity Fun Day – the community fundraising event for the community! Put together by our friends and supporters from all walks of life, Kampong Assisi promises to be bigger and more exciting than past editions.

With more than 150 stalls, there will be something for everyone! Look forward to fun booths featuring games we used to play as kids and reminisce the good 'ole' days of our vibrant local music scene with our line-up of retro entertainers! And of course, a local event like ours will not be complete without the many themed food stalls featuring traditional snacks that we hardly see these days! There will also be a heritage trail for the children or the young at heart!

So mark your calendar for 14 June, "jio" all your family and friends and join us at Kampong Assisi for that walk down memory lane!

Assisi Hospice Charity Fun Day 2015
14 June 2015, SJI International School, 10am – 4.30pm
To buy tickets or make a donation, call 6347 6442.



New Wards

The two new wards – St Dominic and St Michael – are slated to be completed in July this year. Named after the Archangel Michael, the new St Michael is the new medical and surgical single ward while St Dominic, named after the patron saint of science and astronomy, will add another 15 new single maternity wards. At the same time, work is ongoing to expand St Francis ward, adding another 10 beds.



*All pictures are artist impressions. Actual interiors may differ.

A Walk For The Yusof Ishak Professorship

For our 54th anniversary celebration on this day, the hospital did something different and meaningful. Taking inspiration from the Sisters, the hospital launched its fund raising campaign in support of the Yusof Ishak Professorship Fund on 4th March.

More than 350 hospital staff and specialist doctors were dressed in ethnic costumes for the mass walk along Thomson Road and Marymount Road. This was to be in line with the professorship's teaching and research focus on multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism in Singapore.

The event was officiated by Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, MP for Nee Soon and Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of Health & Ministry of Transport. Sr Jane Bertelsen, FMDM Congregational Leader flew in from UK to join the event.

Over the next few months up to end June, the hospital aims to raise \$24,000 for the Professorship.

Donation boxes are placed at the Front Desk and Patient Liaison Centre for public who want to make a contribution.



Pioneer Generation FMDM Sisters with FMDM Congregational Leader Sister Jane, Chairman Mr Phillip Tan (front row, 4th from right) and Executive Management Team.



From left (front): Sister Thomasina, FMDM Congregational Leader Sister Jane and Sister Agnes.

Excerpt of FMDM Congregational Leader Sr Jane's Address

As I was thinking about this morning and what we are all doing here, the word INTERCONNECTEDNESS stands out for me. Today symbolises an extraordinary coming together of a number of strands of life and it gives us the opportunity to give thanks to those who have gone before us, and, on whose shoulders we stand and continue to contribute to the legacy they have left us.

St Francis of Assisi said to his brothers as he lay dying "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours to do"

What is ours to do today? May I offer two suggestions which connect our three themes mentioned above. First, we grow in our appreciation of those who played their part in establishing all that Singapore is today – its culture, its economy, its values, its society and commit ourselves to doing what is ours to do so when Singapore celebrates its 100th birthday people will look back and know this generation made its positive contribution. Second, we as a hospital community support the Yusof Ishak Professorship Fund – not only financially but by living all that it wishes to achieve. Mount Alvernia Hospital stands in a unique position to model all that the professorship seeks to research, teach and promote - the richness, the beauty and the potential of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-faith community. Just look around you – you can see it! Daily each of you whatever your role welcomes, embraces and offers compassionate care to all your sisters and brothers who walk through our doors – patients, families, fellow staff, vendors, contractors and visitors – each one presents us with an opportunity to SERVE ALL with LOVE – this is what is ours to do.

As we look to the future which, in our world today, can seem so uncertain, fragile and even dangerous, let our celebration today strengthen our resolve to play our part in building a peace-filled, harmonious community where the dreams of our Singapore pioneers, of our early FMDM sisters, of Yusof Ishak himself can be realised and made even richer so that we can say to the next generation "we have done what is ours to do, may you know what is yours to do".

All About That Baby

Having a baby is a time of anticipation for everyone... but nothing beats the joy of feeling the life inside you.

Visitors to Adorable Baby and Babycare Festival attended sessions with Senior Nurse Manager and Lactation Consultant, Ms Kang Phaik Gaik who gave a talk on baby massage. Parents were also given hands-on practice on how to massage their babies at the Babycare Festival held in February.

Besides the massage demonstration, Ms Kang also talked about breastfeeding for newborns and how to start. At the Adorable Baby event which took place in January, Ms Kang was joined by the hospital's Dietitian, Ms Janice Chong, who spoke on weaning foods for babies from 6 months onwards and Dr Felicia Tan on myths and truths about breast cancer.

About 5,000 people visited both of our events and some of them took the opportunity to document that wonderful journey by posing at our photo wall!



Ms Kang onstage demonstrating baby massage.



Janice Chong presented on weaning foods for baby from 6 months onwards at Adorable Baby.

Your Baby Is Now A Toddler!

The toddler years are a time of great cognitive, emotional and social development. There are also so many things to expect from the little ones – from potty training, to cultivating eating habits, to speech development and to using a toothbrush.

As the hospital partner at Singapore Press Holding's (SPH) Young Toddler Seminar event which took place in February, Dr Ong Eng Keow, paediatrician and neonatologist, from International Child & Adolescent Clinic presented on flu and cough which are common ailments that affect toddlers attending playschool or childcare centres.



Dr Ong Eng Keow spoke on paediatric cough and flu at Young Parents Toddler Seminar Event.



Father Gerard Weerakoon of Church of St Francis Xavier had his health checked by hospital staff.

Hospital staff volunteers at Divine Mercy Church health screening event.

Bringing health screening services to PERTAPIS Halfway House.

Mission In Action

The outreach activities through health screening is off to a meaningful start in 2015. For the first time, we brought health screening to Pertapis Halfway House, an establishment that provides treatment and rehabilitative services to substance abusers to enable them to reintegrate into society.

Working through Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), volunteers from the hospital screened more than 57 residents of the halfway house.

The hospital also continued its routine of reaching out to parishes beginning with St Michael and Divine Mercy Church at the start of the year. More than 250 parishioners from three Catholic churches - St Francis Xavier, Divine Mercy and St Michael - were screened since January.

Dr Elliot Eng So Ping
Director and Consultant ENT Surgeon
Ascent Ear Nose Throat SG Alvernia
Mount Alvernia Hospital



Do you sometimes find yourself in a situation where you have to ask others to repeat themselves during conversations? Do others complain that the sound level from your television or radio is too loud? Do you experience a ringing noise in your ear? If your answer is YES, then these could be warning signs that you may have hearing loss.

Better Hearing, Better Living

“These disabilities could socially estrange someone from the community since the sufferer may fear not being understood so the individual would rather not participate in any conversation at all.”

At the workplace, you may not participate effectively in meetings as you like once did because you know you will not be able to understand. Everyone reacts differently to different types of hearing loss.

However, THERE IS HELP. The most important step you can take is to understand that hearing loss does not mean you lose everything. A deeper understanding of its causation and associated treatment options help you make decisions to get that help.



Diagnosis

“Typically, an otoscopic examination is performed in the clinic which may reveal abnormalities in the external auditory canal, ear drum or middle ear. To determine the type of hearing loss (conductive or sensorineural), bedside tuning fork test can be performed. In addition, a pure tone audiogram (to test for threshold response to pure tones), tympanogram (to measure middle ear pressure) and speech discrimination scores, can be conducted by an audiologist in the clinic. At times, a computer tomography scan of the temporal bone (CT TB) can be performed,” Dr Eng explains.

Symptoms and Signs

Besides the symptoms of speaking loudly, increasing volume from television and radio, Dr Elliot Eng explains that you could also be experiencing associated symptoms of sound in the ear, vertigo, ear discharge or pain in the ear – depending on the causes.

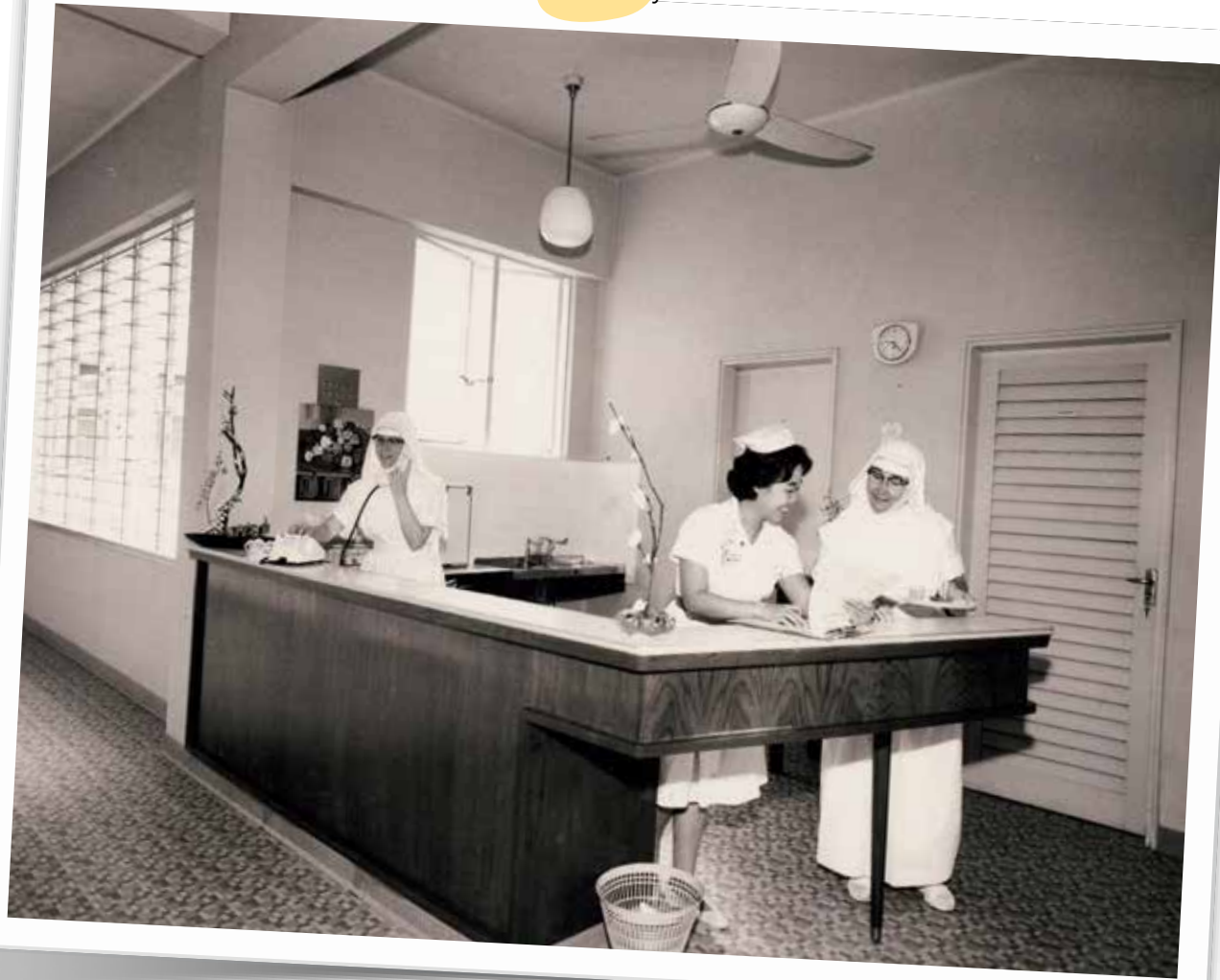
Treatment Options

Treatment will depend largely on causes. Some can be treated with medication or surgery but others may be rehabilitated with hearing aids.

- **Hearing Preservation Surgery**
 - There are many options available to treat outer, middle and inner ear conditions while preserving hearing. These include procedures involving repair of the damaged ear drum, removing disease in the middle ear and thus improving aeration and restoring mobility of the middle ear bones and removing middle ear fluid.
- **Hearing Aids**
 - Hearing aids help to amplify sound delivery to the inner ear. They can be broadly divided to conventional hearing aids which are worn externally, or implantable hearing aids. The type of hearing aid suitable to each patient would depend on the underlying etiology and severity of hearing loss.
 - Implantable hearing aids are recommended in situations whereby patients have bilateral profound hearing loss for which hearing aids are not helpful, single sided deafness or absent/malformed external ears which may hinder placement of the external hearing device.
 - There are currently three commonly used hearing implants: Bone anchored hearing aid (BAHA), middle ear implants (vibrant sound bridge) and the cochlear implant.

Precaution

The first step to preventing hearing loss is to reduce exposure to noise and loud sounds. Reduce the chance of ear infection by minimising the use of a cotton swab, hairpin, or other object in your ear to try to remove earwax or to scratch your ear. These actions often cause more damage than good. Finally, be mindful of the early warning symptoms so that you seek early and prompt treatment with an ENT specialist.



Living The Moment

“Be present in all things and thankful for all things.” These are the words of well-known American author, poet and civil rights activist, the late Maya Angelou, that aptly describe the attitudes of our Founding Sisters. Their enthusiasm and passion have been sought in cultivating optimism, in celebrating everyday moments, in finding one’s purpose, and in embracing uncertainty. Here then, are six lessons from Mount Alvernia Hospital history’s most resilient and creative minds – the FMDM Sisters.

1 Serve With Both Competency And Compassion

The FMDM Sisters displayed competency and compassion in everything they established or managed. The Sisters who took over the nursing and caring for the TB (tuberculosis) and leprosy patients in the early days received their nursing qualifications and hospital attachments in the United Kingdom. They managed hospital wards as self-contained units since isolation was the only treatment at that time.

Despite the possibility of contracting the disease, the Sisters cared for and nursed leprosy patients with dedication and professionalism. Every day, they dressed the patients’ sores from “The Leper Camp” with gentle care and competent hands.

In 1950, to ensure continuous care for chronic TB patients, the Sisters set up a training school to provide nursing training to recruits on TB care. At the end of a two-year training, each recruit was awarded a certificate in TB Nursing and graduating students went further to train in General Nursing. This was important as education for girls was disrupted during the war and nursing was not a popular career choice for girls. This was



a major development and a significant contribution by the FMDM Sisters in the history of nursing in Singapore.

2 Focus On Now

The plan to build a 200-bed hospital was disrupted in 1959 as a result of competing priorities following the formation of self-government by the

People’s Action Party (PAP). The promise of a dollar-to-dollar matching grant by the colonial government to the Sisters’ fund collection was cancelled. Instead of giving up the idea of setting up the hospital altogether, the Sisters adjusted the plan to build a smaller 60-bed hospital instead.

Even after the hospital was officially opened in 1961, each day after work at the hospital, the Sisters would traverse the island in pairs to continue to collect funds to run the hospital. They stayed focused in the present on the purposes intended for them and were unwilling to let any adversity detract them from their cause.

Sister Agnes Tan made this observation in *A Tradition Of Compassionate And Patient-Centred Care*: “the Sisters showed not the least bit of anxiety (working amongst the tuberculosis and leprosy patients). On the contrary, they seemed so alive and full of purpose while waiting to go to work....”

3 Stay Nimble And Joyful

The Sisters took on multiple roles with enthusiasm and joy. In addition to the usual ward duties, the Sisters were also housekeepers, ambulance drivers, and meal servers. They also took care of the doctors as well; making sure



that they had their meals and enough rest after attending to patients in the night. These duties were carried out daily so that there was no lapse in patient care. Sister Anne Goh spoke of “the radiant joy” that she saw in her seniors. She said, “The spirit of joy is not tangible, but it can be sensed.”

4 Pay Attention To Details

The small things matter. Long before the hospital was ready, the Sisters gathered during teatime and in the evenings to sew. These were not the practical chores of just hemming sheets or sewing hospital gowns but lavish detailed embroidery on bed linen and coverings for baby cribs. Each patient’s food tray was lined with a tea cloth intricately decorated, making each patient feel pampered and personally served. Each piece of linen had artwork which was painstakingly created and sewn into the fabric hand-stitch by hand-stitch by the Sisters.



The Sisters also handled tasks such as electrical wiring, fittings, shopping for linen and ordering equipment. All the hospital’s founding sisters remember the days of ‘cleaning and clearing the rooms’. Manually transforming the hospital into

an operationally ready one required a lot of hard work, but the extra touches by the Sisters bear testament to the immense joy and pride they took in everything they did. They helped put the care back in healthcare -- that is the signature of Mount Alvernia Hospital even today.

5 Lead The Way

For the first 25 years of its history, the Sisters ran the hospital. But, from 1987, the Sisters began to appoint lay executives to take over their functions with the aim of further augmenting patient care services and to add more clinical capacity to the hospital. Some of the personal practices established by the Sisters evolved into a tradition among lay department heads. This in turn, provided institutional continuity. For example, Laboratory Principal Manager, Teng Kah Lee would continue Sister Andreina Chin’s practice of going up to the wards to establish a connection between the front lines of patient care and support services. By the 1990s, the Sisters handed over the administration of the hospital to lay executives.

Even today, while the Sisters continue to maintain a presence and are always available for counselling and consultation, they are also able to keep up with the progress of the times. For example, when the Intranet was introduced, Sister Agnes was among the first to get online to set an example.



Like Sister Agnes, Sister Anne who previously served as the hospital’s Director of Nursing and then Mission Awareness Coordinator passed on the FMDM’s joy of caring so that the hospital will continue to maintain a patient-centred approach and a sustained vision of compassionate care.

Another key attribute of successful role modelling to lay management and executives is the Sisters’ willingness to share their expertise, resulting in positive influence. The older staff who took over the duties during the transition period would often speak fondly of the Sisters sharing hands-on experiences such as handling inpatients, collaborating with doctors and medication administration whenever they were less busy.

6 Be Thankful

When the Sisters recount their past, they speak of being grateful to many generous benefactors such as Ee Peng Liang, Khoo Teck Puat and Tan Sri Dr Lee Kong Chian for supporting their cause in the 1960s. The Sisters crisscrossed the island to canvass donations and held flag days at regular intervals to raise money for the hospital. The hospital cost \$1.6 million to set up and the Sisters gave 10 years of their pay towards defraying this cost. Donors and well-wishers also contributed to the funding. In fact, Sister Agnes recalled that the late Dr Lee made the very first ‘big’ cheque donation of \$44,000 to the hospital.



The Sisters are always ready, willing and able. For them, nursing is far more than a career. It is a calling that blends professionalism with compassion to care for patients, doctors and people where no task is too small. Then and now, each (task) is completed with professionalism, sincerity and joy. The Sisters are resilient – their conviction and enthusiasm to “Serve All With Love” has resulted in the growth of the hospital -- from 60-beds in 1961 to what Mount Alvernia Hospital is today -- a modern 17,490 sqm facility with more than 300 beds, home to over 60 specialist clinics and 28 specialties such as cardiology, neurology, paediatrics and orthopaedics.

Over the years, there have been tales of courage where hope was renewed. There have been tales of happiness where life was birthed. Yet, there have also been tales of sadness in which bitter disappointment set in. Through it all, the Sisters were always on the frontlines ... and in the sidelines... professional and dedicated nurses who also befriended those in need, radiating hope, joy and love.

The culture passed on by the Sisters is unique; the lessons, inspiring. The enthusiasm and indomitable spirit of the Sisters strengthen the quality of patient care and create a positive and consistent experience for our patients – an experience that heals the mind, body and spirit.



Babies?

Today, many married couples put off having babies until they feel that they are financially stable to give their kids the best. Career is the other commonly cited reason. Given advanced medical and prenatal care, most women can have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby even at advanced maternal age.

Concern about their biological clock ticking is far from their minds. For the first order births, the median age of mothers had increased from 29.3 years in 2004 to 30.3 years in 2013.¹

Optimum age to conceive

The best age for a couple to conceive depends on many considerations such as social and economic factors. However from a purely biological consideration, the 20s is probably the best decade for conceiving and carrying a baby, according to Dr Chen.

"However, there are also problems with having a pregnancy too early, such as teenage pregnancy, which is associated with low birth weight in a newborn and a higher rate of complications during the delivery."

Age and chances of conceiving

There are approximately two million cells in the ovaries at birth. Only about 400,000 of the cells survive till puberty, and only about 400 of those that survive until puberty will be released at ovulation during a woman's lifetime. The rest will degenerate.

"Another point to remember is that the quality of the cells that survive also deteriorates with age which will increase the risk of Down's syndrome. In fact, all chromosomal abnormalities increase with maternal age," he added.

Health risks

"The chance of spontaneous miscarriage (foetal loss before 24 weeks of pregnancy) and stillbirth (foetal loss after 24 weeks of pregnancy) are increased," Dr Chen cautioned. "Another concern — the risk of having an abnormal foetus is also increased. A significant proportion of the increased risk is due to abnormal genetic make up in the foetus."

Extreme form of nausea and vomiting in pregnancy (hyperemesis gravidarum) is also more common in an older mother. This is often attributed to the patient's increased anxiety.

Late pregnancy can bring on an onset of high blood pressure, increased blood sugar levels and preterm labour. "Before any woman plans for conception, she

Later.

However, delaying motherhood has a downside with important implications for women planning a pregnancy, their spouses and their families.

Dr Chen Lin Han sheds light on some of these implications and what you need to know if planning for a late pregnancy.

The term "advanced maternal age" is universally used to describe pregnancies in women aged 35 and older.

should consult her doctor for a pre-pregnancy check up. This is especially important if she is above 40, has a medical condition, is planning her first pregnancy, or if she had a pregnancy many years ago," he advised.

The duration of labour tends to be longer in older mothers due to decreased functional activity of the uterus, elasticity of the soft tissues of the birth canal, as well as muscular and joint mobility.

"Signs of maternal and foetal distress also tend to occur more often than expected in older women," he added.

"As the muscular area is less elastic, the surgical cut to enlarge the opening for the baby to pass through may be more extensive. Perineal tears are more common."

"The net result of all these is assisted or instrumental delivery which is required about two to three times as often as in younger women and the caesarean section rate is increased fourfold which carries a risk of postnatal haemorrhage in older mothers."

However, as long as the mother is in good health prior to the pregnancy, Dr Chen said that she could reasonably expect to have a good obstetric outcome like most normal women.

A positive note

"It is noted that older women are significantly more likely to breast-feed than younger women and this may reflect more positive attitudes to breast-feeding in older women. They are also likely to have greater financial resources, social stability, and age-related attributes such as emotional maturity, wisdom and experience of life, which can have positive effects on a child's development."

Dr Chen quelled a common misconception between late pregnancy and a child's IQ. "There is no definite correlation between a child's IQ development and maternal age. Neither positive nor negative correlation can be substantiated. The key to a successful pregnancy is preparation. The other key is to have adequate nutrition prior to pregnancy," he concluded.

¹ Report On Registration Of Births And Deaths 2013, pp 7



Children are getting less sleep these days, according to a recent study¹ by Nanyang Technological University undergraduates and the National University Hospital (NUH). The study polled 307 respondents, comprising parents with children from 6 to 9 years old. It found that about four out of 10 primary school children aged six to nine are not getting enough sleep. These children felt sleepy during the day, which the study said is a sign of sleep deprivation¹.

Dr Ignatius Mark shares some insight on why sleep is much needed for children, and should not be taken lightly.

Why is having enough sleep important for growing kids?

A large proportion of growth hormone secretion occurs during sleep and most of it during deep sleep. Disruption of sleep will affect growth hormone secretion and hence may affect the physical growth in a child.

How much sleep should kids of different age ranges need?

Sleep needs vary among individuals even of the same age. However there is a trend for higher sleep requirements in the newborn and this decreases as the child ages, till adulthood when the sleep needs become relatively stable. Toddlers need about 12-13 hours of sleep, preschoolers about 11-12 hours, 10-11 in school going children, and 9-9.5 hours in adolescents.

What are some signs to show that Junior is not having enough sleep?

- Excessive sleepiness or even hyperactivity from sleep deprivation from any cause.
- Snoring due to Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA). Obstructive Sleep Apnoea is due to a combination of several causes that result in narrowing of the upper airway and/or increased tissue laxity of the upper airway walls. This causes collapse and obstruction of the airway during sleep which causes snoring and disruption of sleep architecture. It does not necessarily go away with age.

Some sleep disorders may have a genetic link as part of the multi-factorial cause of the condition, like narcolepsy (a neurological disorder that affects the control of sleep and wakefulness) and OSA. Fatal familial insomnia (failing to fall sleep) is uncommon but is a condition that is hereditary (through families).

For a child who is struggling to get enough sleep on school days, would catching up on sleep over the weekend be helpful at all?

Catching up on sleep during the weekend will help to restore the sleep debt accumulated during the week but will not help the child during the week when the child is sleep deprived.

In Singapore, kids spend a lot of time on TV as well as gadgets like iPad, iPhone and computer games. How do these affect a child's sleep, especially if he uses these gadgets before bedtime?

Activities that are alerting and increase wakefulness can interfere with sleep onset and sleep maintenance. Exposure to bright lights (from any source) before bed can also affect sleep onset by delaying the circadian rhythm. Electronic gadgets per se do not have an adverse effect on sleep. If these devices can be used to relax the mind (like watching movies, listening to music or reading an electronic book) they may actually be helpful for sleep.

¹Amanda Lee, (5 February 2015), Four in 10 S'porean children aged 6 to 9 are sleep deprived, Today. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/lower-primary-school-children-not-getting-enough-sleep?singlepage=true>



Crying Out Loud!

Baby crying is inevitable and can really test your patience. However, crying is your baby's way of telling you that he/she needs help and attention from you. Before you start agonising over the cries, here are some 'crib' notes from Dr Simon Ng to help you understand what your baby may be saying to you.



I'm hungry

When baby is hungry, he or she will show signs such as opening his mouth as if searching for something and will cry if his hunger needs are not met. So mothers should respond to the baby's hunger needs if she notices the initial signs even before the child cries.



Please help me change my diaper

When the baby soils himself, clean the baby. Check the baby's diapers routinely before and after feeds and when the baby cries.



I'm uncomfortable

This condition can present as regurgitation or repeated vomiting. The child may experience discomfort and cry soon after feeds. To deal with this, mothers can burp the baby and prop up the baby after feeding for about half an hour or so.



I don't feel well

A child may experience discomfort or pain and hence cry. If the baby has other symptoms of illnesses such as fever, vomiting, cough, diarrhoea or constipation, treat these underlying illnesses appropriately.



Colic

When all other causes of crying listed above have been excluded, the crying may be attributed to colic. Typically colic affects babies around the ages of 1-2 months. Mothers can try to cuddle baby or give a gentle massage. If this does not work, use a probiotic or wind drop.



What Foods to Introduce ...and When?

It's time for your baby to try solid food. As every baby is different, there's always anxiety about how the little one will take to this new experience. This is no surprise as up till this point, your baby has only known breast milk or formula. Therefore, your baby will need a while to get used to different textures and tastes.

We ask Janice Chong, our Clinical Dietitian about introducing solids to your baby.

Many overseas weaning websites touch on things like freezing purées in batches. But what about Asian baby food like porridge or tofu. Can porridge/ tofu be frozen in batches and reheated?

If you need to freeze foods for future use, it is advisable to freeze plain food (e.g. plain porridge, plain tofu) without addition of other ingredients and freeze it quickly in order to minimise risk of cross contamination. Do not re-freeze thawed baby food as it may post a risk of food poisoning to your baby.

What are better, more nutritious alternatives to rice porridge for the baby?

It is advisable to serve foods that are packed with nutrients for the baby's growth and development. Some

examples are: Iron fortified rice cereals mixed with milk, mashed potato with baked fish, home cooked macaroni soup or mee sua soup with minced chicken.

What about Asian herbs and spices like ginger, chives, lemongrass to flavour the baby's food? When would be a good age to introduce these local herbs and spices, and what to take note of when introducing these foods?

There is no specific guideline on the suitable age to introduce herbs and spices but most doctors recommend waiting until eight months to introduce spices in the baby's diet. This is to help prevent stomach upsets as well as allergic reactions. Introduce only one spice at a time in very small amounts. Wait for a few days before introducing another new spice. And, remember to watch for any allergic reactions.

What about local beverages like barley, chrysanthemum tea and sugar cane juice for the baby? Are these safe for the baby, and what age should the baby try these? What to note when introducing these local beverages to the baby?

There are no specific recommendations regarding the age to let the baby try those beverages but try to avoid introducing these beverages before the age of 6 months as breast milk is the main source of fluid and nutrients. It is advisable to have no sugar, syrup or honey added to the drinks, as babies may develop a sweet preference from the sugar-sweetened beverages. This may establish unhealthy eating habits that could persist later in toddler years.

GUT Feeling

While lifestyle improvement positively impacts social quality, it also spawns a new set of health challenges – digestive disorders. We talk to Dr Jarrod Lee and Dr Mark Fernandes about how these societal trends impact the nature of care and treatment options that patients can look forward to.

Providing Total Gut Care

As far back as 20 years ago, surgeons were trained to perform a wide variety of operations. That has changed over the last decade where surgeons spend years in additional sub-specialty training to become experts in the various fields of general surgery. While gastroenterology used to be part of the general surgery department, Dr Jarrod Lee said that today most public hospitals have standalone gastroenterology departments. Within gastroenterology, it is further spilt up into sub-specialties to offer patients detailed specialty examinations and care.

Dr Lee aspires to emulate the same model with gutCARE, a clinic he founded to bring together sub-specialties physicians under one medical practice in a private hospital environment.

Dr Jarrod Lee and Dr Mark Fernandes are at gutCARE Digestive • Liver • Endoscopy Associates Medical Centre D #07-55 Singapore Mount Alvernia Hospital 820 Thomson Road Tel: 6258 0508.

gutCARE
digestive • liver • endoscopy associates





The clinic comprises of gastroenterologists who are regionally renowned experts in different sub-specialty areas. Each sub-specialist will spearhead the development of services in his area, so that the group will always have the latest expertise and services in digestive diseases. Such a model of care would not be possible in a traditional solo practice.”

By bringing together a team of leading experts in the gastro field, gutCARE is able to present a complete treatment option to their patients.

In 2011, Dr Lee was the first doctor from Southeast Asia to win the coveted American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Audiovisual (ASGE AV) Award for his advanced endoscopy techniques in Endoscopic Ultrasound. He was formerly from Khoo Teck Puat Hospital before starting his own private practice in 2013.

Societal Changes And Gastro Health

“Increased affluence of society in Singapore has resulted in changes of lifestyle patterns that have not always been particularly good for individual

health. As gastro physicians, we see that these patterns have an impact on many problematic gastro conditions such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, and other digestive cancers such as colon cancer,” Dr Mark Fernandes explained.

These health problems are directly associated with such lifestyle related problems as obesity, diabetes, and the metabolic syndrome. As these conditions have become more prominent in society, they have led to an increase in related gastro health problems.

Dr Fernandes is an established gastroenterologist in private practice with a special interest in liver disease. His Health Manpower Development Programme (HMDP) was in liver cancer and liver transplantation. He was part of the liver transplant team at the National University Hospital and was the first Gastroenterologist in Singapore to perform radiofrequency ablation for liver cancer. In addition, he has the largest experience in Singapore with using Fibroscan®, a non-invasive technique to assess the progression of liver disease.

Digestive Care For The Elderly

According to Dr Lee, the growing elderly population has its impact on the nature of patient care.

“Digestive disorders are very common in the elderly. Common digestive symptoms include constipation, abdominal discomfort, bloating and heartburn. Management of such disorders in the elderly is not the same as in younger patients and should be carefully individualised. Serious conditions such as cancer are also more common in the elderly. Digestive cancers such as colorectal, stomach and pancreatic cancer remain among the top 10 causes of cancer death in the country. These need to be carefully considered,” he explained.

Managing Gastro Health

Gastro symptoms are very common. However, the challenge is in knowing when to actually worry about these symptoms. To make things more complex, digestive symptoms are not reliable indicators of a more serious condition like cancer. “If a thorough evaluation has not been done recently,

do consider seeing a doctor. As a general rule, experts recommend observing or self-medicating up to a maximum of six weeks. If the symptoms persist, one should seek proper specialist advice,” Dr Lee advised.

For those concerned about digestive cancers, Dr Lee’s advice is to see a gastroenterologist specialising in this niche area. A radiologic scan or endoscopic procedure is usually done to assess the condition. Today, digestive cancer prevention is much more sophisticated and precise. “With the ‘next generation’ endoscopic technology, we are able to go several steps further. We can advise each person on his individualised cancer risk, determine the short to medium term risk of cancer and even take steps to mitigate the risk and prevent cancer altogether.”

“Cultivate good digestive habits from a young age. This will hold you in good stead as you grow older. Eat a balanced diet, take adequate fibre, drink at least two litres of water daily and exercise regularly. This advice may sound clichéd, but it is the basis of a healthy digestive system.”

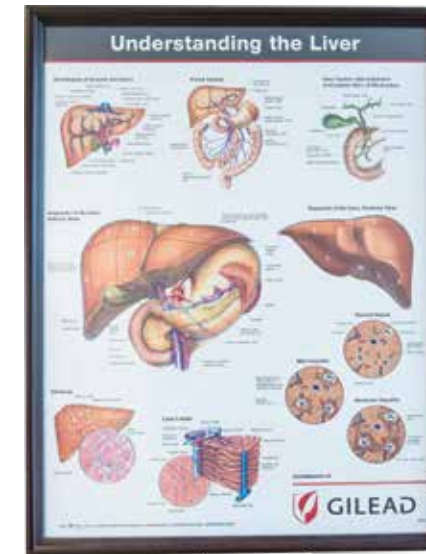
Typical Day

Both doctors start early with reviewing patients in the hospitals wards and straddle between procedures such as endoscopies and gastroscopies or seeing patients in clinic and end with a second ward round. In between there are always meetings and administrative work to complete.

Dr Lee returns to the public sector weekly to perform advanced endoscopy for the more complex procedures. After office hours, he links up with his patients either over email or Whatsapp. Occasionally, he also provides ‘pro bono’ specialist advice to many colleagues in primary care or other specialties.

A New Day, A New Challenge

Both Dr Lee and Dr Fernandes are truly passionate about their work in the clinic. Their passion for the field includes both the opportunity to build relationships with it and to improve the lives of his patients



as well as the excitement of scientific research that can lead to even greater improvements in medical care.

This scientific side of Dr Fernandes’ work appealed to him as this was one aspect that drew him into medicine initially, and it continues to be a part of what he considers the “exhilarating experience” of being a doctor: “The amazing experience of being a doctor is that each day is a new challenge. Each day we are faced with new problems to solve. Each patient is a new puzzle. Each patient is a new relationship to build, and each day is a new opportunity to learn.”

“I’m passionate about gastroenterology and endoscopy. The advantage of Singapore being a cosmopolitan city is that I get to see patients from all corners of the globe. Understanding the different cultures and diets, and how they affect digestive health is really a great adventure for me,” said Dr Lee.

“One of the best things about my specialty is that I get to evaluate new devices and prototypes before they are out on the market. Advanced endoscopy is heavily reliant on technology. As a fairly young discipline, the rate of technological advancement in the past few years has been exponential. Keeping up with new medi-equipment and technology is critical to my grounding in advance endoscopy,” he added.

Choosing Gastroenterology

As a child, Dr Jarrod Lee wanted to be an environmentalist. He was not looking at saving one tree or a turtle but saving the planet.

Upon graduation from medical school, Dr Lee was torn about which specialty to choose. “I treasured the deep analytical skills of physicians, yet I yearned for the excitement and technical challenges found in surgery,” shared Dr Lee.

Then he discovered gastroenterology. “It seemed like a perfect fit — a convergence of medicine and surgery. Fundamentally, Gastroenterology is a sub-specialty of Internal Medicine and demands the analytical skills of a physician. However, endoscopy demands the technical skills expected of every surgeon.”

As for Dr Fernandes, he had always been interested in biological science from a young age. “In medical school I was particularly drawn to viruses and cancer. Gastroenterology provided a great marriage between these two fields in the form of viral hepatology.”

“In the 1990s to this day, viral hepatology has provided such an exciting journey with tremendous progress in terms of the development of excellent treatments for diseases as well as progress in the treatment of liver cancer and improvement in outcomes of liver transplantation,” he added.

Internal Affairs

The top causes of death in Singapore such as heart attack and stroke share a common symptom – diabetes. We catch up with Dr Goh Kian Peng, an endocrinologist to learn about internal medicine and his inspiration.

Entering Medicine

Dr Goh tells his own story from his days as a child when his parents were both involved in healthcare, his father as a lab technician in the old Singapore General Hospital building and his mother as a nurse at Toa Payoh Hospital.

“My mother would often times come home in the early hours of the morning after working through the night during the late shift.” Little did he know that he would be likewise caring for patients on late night calls many years later.

Though he never felt any pressure from his parents to enter the medical field, he felt that being exposed at a very young age to life in the medical world probably had some influence on his decision later in life.

Another factor that paved his foot path into medicine is his consciousness of his own health.

“At one stage, I was what you might even call a health fanatic.” Dr Goh said he watched his diet like a hawk and was running and gymming on a daily basis coupled with swimming and karate training. Though he is not as consumed today with these health activities as he was before, he still recognizes the fundamental importance of diet and exercise to stay fit and healthy. “So, entering medicine was probably a logical progression for me,” he added.

The Field of Endocrinology

For Dr Goh, his specialty in endocrinology has a close relationship with his background in general medicine. He considers himself ‘both a compartmentaliser and a big picture person’. He views his practice as a combination of those two traits: “I like to know the details as well as how they fit into the grand scheme of things, and this has filtered down to my choice of specialties. Treating a person in totality has always been my aim for every patient and Endocrinology is a specialty that allows me to do that.”

He goes on to explain how a disease such as diabetes is the perfect example of how his medical specialty relates closely also to general medicine: “Diabetes is a systemic disease affecting every organ system. For example, patients often do not present with [just] one problem. A diabetic patient can be admitted with sepsis complicated by renal damage, raised liver enzymes and a stroke or heart attack. Even though it is often the diabetes that is the underlying cause of all these complications, I also need to be competent in managing the other problems. As the primary physician, I have the responsibility to manage the underlying diabetes, hold the big picture in place, and appreciate how each complication with its treatment interacts and affects the others.”



According to Diabetic Society of Singapore, one out of 9 people aged 18 to 69 has diabetes. That’s about 11.3% of our population or more than 400,000 people. “Diabetes should be treated early and effectively so that it does not lead to blindness,” said Dr Goh.

“Thyroid disorders, on the other hand, are very satisfying to treat as the treatments are often successful. A young patient of mine who presented with a neck lump which turned out to be papillary thyroid cancer – the commonest and best form of thyroid cancer in terms of survival. Surgery with post-operative treatment was quickly organised and today, she remains disease-free and is enjoying the growing up years of her children.”

Diabetic patients tend to be in their 50s and older while thyroid patients tend to be in their 20s and 30s, according to Dr Goh.

Dr Goh had his initial background training and experience primarily in general family medicine. After his master’s programme in family medicine, he pursued a specialist training in Endocrinology. In 2003, he joined Alexandra Hospital as a Registrar and stayed on with Alexandra Health Service (AHS) shifting to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) in 2010.



In addition to running his own clinic at Mount Alvernia Hospital, he still runs a Thyroid Clinic at KTPH on Tuesday mornings. He is also Adjunct Assistant Professor with the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore and sits on the board of the Therapeutic Use Exemption Committee of Anti-Doping Singapore, Singapore Sports Council.

Remembering The Giants

One interesting belief that Dr Goh has is that “we lack heroes and mentors” today. He says that medical students

today are trained in knowledge and facts; but without the vision inspired by great leaders.

Two of the men whom he perceived as the giants of his time are Professors Ransome and Seah Cheng Siang. Till today, their work still inspires him and his own career in medicine. In describing them, Dr Goh uses terms such as ‘legendary’ and the “guiding lights” of their day.

“We can start by preserving the memories of those who have gone before

us by remembering that we are where we are now because we are standing on the shoulders of giants.”

So Dr Goh sets about a unique way of introducing medical mentors to his patients, families and his own students at the NUS School of Medicine by choosing a French name that does not sound “medical” – Saint-Julien Clinic For Diabetes And Endocrinology.

Saint-Julien is the birthplace of a significant medical figure, Claude Bernard who introduced the term “internal milieu” to “describe the concept of the internal environment, which led to the discovery of how the body communicates using messengers such as hormones.”

Dr Bernard also discovered the importance of the liver in diabetes development and as well as the role of the pancreas in digestion.

“But his most important contribution was to introduce scientific objectivity to experiments, which paved the way for the rigorous methodology that has become standard practice in modern-day clinical trials,” Dr Goh added.

“So we named our clinic Saint-Julien to let it symbolise the starting point where our patients’ healing journeys begin,” said Dr Goh.

A Personal Side

“Outside of work is family time, sports and reading in that order,” he chuckled.

“I have two children, a nine-year old boy and a six-year old girl. If you want to know more about them, just drop by my clinic one of these days and if you are lucky, you may catch them there doing their homework or looking at a dead ant with my microscope.” These parallels to Dr Goh’s own childhood memories makes one wonder if the same environmental influence that led him into the medical field will not likewise wield the same effect on his children as well, raising up another generation of doctors.

Life after

50



Discovering the new meaning of life. Finding new interests, direction and focus in a new stage of life.

The well-known 19th century poet, Rainer Maria Rilke said, "Live from a deep place." In the late years of individuals, when they have retired from their jobs, their children have grown up, and the world is moving at a faster pace than ever, it is essential that they seek new and deeper meaning and purpose in their lives, so that they maintain their psychological, mental, physical, social and even spiritual well-being.

What is the meaning of life?

It is estimated that at the age of 50, one will have on average 25 to 30 good years remaining, so it is paramount that one makes full use of the energy, time and resources that one has, and not leave any regrets.

For most people, it varies according to their individual values, beliefs, personality, cultural background, educational level and many other factors.

Although not all of us can expect to be great philosophers, scientists, statesmen or business leaders, we still have to aim for our full potential. People who have coped with tragedy, adversity and daily struggles of life, have risen above it and lived the most inspirational lives. Some people may still be focused on further climbing greater heights and overcoming new challenges. Be it rising above adversity, realising our full potential, or simply being occupied with what we find meaningful and important activities, there are many ways seniors can live fulfilling golden years. What's important is to be clear about what one desires and to put it into action.

"It's just the thing of stimulus I think. I'm such an advocate for not stopping, just going on and being challenged. I long to do...the sort of things that I haven't done before. And I will."

Judi Dench
who turned 80 in Dec 2014

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Because if you don't use it, you are sure to lose it!

That exercise is good for the body is something almost everyone is aware about. However, did you know that it is equally important to exercise your brain just as regularly to remain healthy and smart? According to various research studies, our brains are naturally primed to wander whenever it can. That is why it needs to be reined and trained well if you do not want to wonder where you had left your car keys, or recall the name of your neighbour if you bump into them on the street.

Luckily, exercising your cerebral cortex does not require any heavy-duty thinking or straining your mental faculties. In fact, it can be all fun and games! All you need to do is spend a few minutes daily in activities that will stimulate your brain cells.



GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Whenever you read the newspaper, do not dismiss the latter section after reading the comic strips. Try solving the crossword puzzle or Sudoku games often given there. Such mindbenders live up to their names by keeping the brain active. Brain games also help in word skills and boosting language competence while refreshing your mind.

BRING OUT THE BOARD GAMES

On a weekend instead of turning into a couch potato in front of the TV, invite a few friends and family over and bring out board games like Scrabble, Monopoly or even chess. These are evergreen games that can be played with youngsters and mature adults; and they are challenging to the brain, as it keeps trying to



come up with new words or take winning decisions. You can also get the added benefit of some good company that will keep the conversation flowing and smiles coming.

MEMORISE, MEMORISE, MEMORISE

Whenever you pick up the phone to call someone, it helps to memorise their number rather than relying on the contact list. Memorising names, figures and details helps keep our brains cells active. You know what they say about exercising to keep your muscles in top shape – you use it, or you lose it. The same applies to your grey matter. So what are you waiting for? Start now and train your brain through the various ways of doing it more enjoyably!



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Swinging Good Times at 50plus EXPO

Experts say aging gracefully and successfully include accepting changes, having meaningful engagements and enjoyable living.

50plus EXPO, Singapore's largest expo for seniors, is going to be held from May 15 to 17 2015 at the Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hall 401 to 404.

Hosted by the Council for Third Age (C3A) and organised by Pico Art International, the 50plus EXPO is organised into four distinct zones using the acronym L.I.F.E which stands for Live, Inspire, Fulfill and Enjoy. Each zone carries a meaningful message with relevant activities to demonstrate the various ways to embrace active ageing.

"Our direct participation in a geriatric centric event is intended to enable their knowledge of the latest clinical care, health indicators, understand wellness and care delivery models," said Goh Hock Soon, Director of Corporate Development.

¹Yueh B, Shapiro N, MacLean CH, Shekelle PG. Screening and management of adult hearing loss in primary care: scientific review. JAMA 2003;289:1976-85

Visitors at the show can have their cholesterol, sugar level and anthropometry checked by the nurses at our booth.

The hospital has arranged a talk by Dr Elliot Eng Soh Ping, Consultant Ear Nose Throat Surgeon, Ascent Ear Nose Throat SG Alvernia on hearing and aging.

Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic condition in older adults and has important effects on their physical and mental health¹. Whether a hearing loss is small or large, it can affect the quality of life and can be a serious concern if left untreated. Titled "Better Hearing, Better Living", Dr Eng's presentation is scheduled on 16 May.

L.I.F.E At 50plus EXPO

Live zone - Features live shows, performances and sharing sessions by celebrities.

Inspire zone - Visitors can explore volunteerism, learning how to create video blogs and using social media applications to enhance the quality of their daily lives.

Fulfill zone - This zone features an array of activities that are easy and interesting for seniors to pick up. They include Batik painting, palm leaf weaving, Chinese calligraphy, playing the ukulele, crepe making and demonstrations on incorporating nature's super foods for a nutritious diet.

Enjoy zone - Seniors will be able to try their hand at plasticine art, vertical gardening and other simple food art that they can use to bond with their children and grandchildren.

INSPIRING ESCAPE

60 is a landmark birthday and before entering her seventh decade, Ee Siew Lay, Assistant Director, Nursing decides to take the ordinary out of the woods and ride out a totally different life adventure – trekking Mount Kailash in Tibet.

Considered holy ground by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, visiting Mount Kailash last year in the year of the horse is believed to offer more energy and the possibility for increased transformation. This holy site is believed to have first opened for visitors in the year of the Horse.

“The trek to Mount Kailash was inspired by many other factors. 2014 being the horse year meant that we could see the pilgrimage and ritual change of colour of the flags. I was born in the year of the Horse so the trek had special significance for me,” said Siew Lay who turned 60 last year. “Getting to 60 feels like an achievement. I wanted to make 2014 a personal milestone so that when I look back I have something I can remember.”

“I also wanted to test my cardiac stent that was inserted in 2005 and my adaptability in a high altitude environment,” she said, beaming with a smile. Last September, after months of

physical and diet conditioning, Siew Lay set off on a 3-day trek to and around Mount Kailash, the sacred mountain in the far west of Tibet.

THE PREPARATION

Her preparation and ‘keep fit’ regimen included climbing 20 floors every weekend, walking and working out on a thread mill. She took the stairs in the MRT and maintained mental fortitude. She also visited her cardiologist and her neurologist regularly to make sure that she was fit and ready to travel. Siew Lay said, “It is a mindset. I believed I can do it so I wanted to prove to myself that I can.”

The trip was organised by a Tibetan Buddhist group, with 28 participants from different walks of life, with the oldest being 68 and the youngest, at 35 years. Two other former Mount Alvernia Hospital staff also accompanied Siew Lay. She also maintained a vegetarian diet for three months prior to the trek so as to acclimate her palette to vegetarian food during the two-week trip.



THE JOURNEY

“We were on the road for three days, with a 16-hour bus ride each day from Lhasa to the base of Mount Kailash. We walked for three days to circumambulate (to walk around something as part of a ritual) the mountain, walking from 4500m to 5600m. It was a tough walk at times, with each step being laboured. Our endurance was tested. We had to get off our horses and walk for a stretch at the highest point where no horses were allowed. Throughout the day, the temperature hovered in the 8 to 12 degrees Celsius range. In the evenings, we rested in a tiny room with four beds and a make-shift toilet (within the room). There were no shower facilities. “This was when “Wet Ones” saved the day,” she chuckled.



The group ascended to 5600m which was the highest point. This was followed by a ceremonial discarding of old clothes as a symbolic gesture to signify the re-birth of a better person. Towards the end of the trek, Siew Lay’s nursing background and training came in handy. During the journey from the mountain back to Lhasa, she calmed one of the participants who suffered from high altitude sickness. For Siew Lay, the takeaway of the whole experience is that a strong mental state of mind is paramount to completing the circumambulation, and have trust, faith and determination.

AGE IS MIND OVER MATTER

For Siew Lay, exercise regimen and physical activity have helped her maintain and restore her strength, balance, flexibility and endurance. She said, “Growing older does not mean that a person has to lose strength or the ability to do everyday tasks. Exercise can help older adults feel better and enjoy life more, even those who think they’re too old or too out of shape. There is a lot of life left, after all. You do not have to accomplish everything in your life — or ‘have it all’. With age, we have a better grasp on how to live and live it well.”

Siew Lay added, “We need to re-think this notion of aging. The decline that happens with aging is not a result of aging but a result of inactivity.”

One other thing Siew Lay is sure to do is to save the best part of her expedition story for her grandchild, like all proud grandparents do.



DEBUNKING Nutrition Myths

Some conventional food wisdom may not be so wise while other eating advice seem to sound like urban legends. Starting this issue, we debunk some of these myths, and discuss the options for healthier food choices.

In Part 1, we discuss skipping meals, which is a popular way to lose weight. Unfortunately, the side effects of skipping meals are much more serious than its assumed potential benefits. We speak to our Clinical Dietitians to find out more.

01

Why is this untrue? Please explain how this method doesn't work.

Some people may have overlooked the negative health impact on losing weight through skipping meals, thinking that when they take fewer meals, their calorie intake will be less which will help them to achieve weight loss more successfully.

Undoubtedly, skipping meals, means that there is no or less calorie intake; however, this method will not be sustainable and it may have adverse effects on health.

When we skip a meal, we tend to overeat during the next meal unintentionally. Also, by skipping meals, it may also cause us to have the urge to crave for snacks in between. As a result, these contribute to the intake of more calories.

02

How does skipping meals affect our body adversely? For instance, does it slow our metabolism, etc?

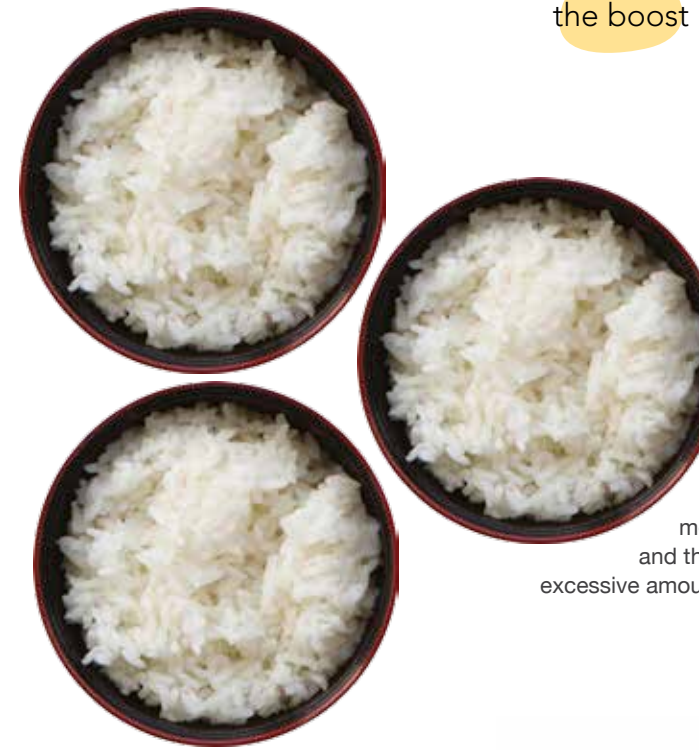
When skipping meals, this causes our body to undergo a "fasting state". Our body prefers to use carbohydrates as the main source of energy. During a fasting state, it breaks down glycogen stored in the muscle and liver to get carbohydrate for energy. The body will preserve the protein stores and start to break down fat as an alternative source of energy and the formation of ketone bodies occurs once the glycogen store is depleted. When the body switches to the use of ketone bodies, it will start to reduce energy output in an effort to protect both fat and lean tissue. In another words, the body will push to conserve calories rather than burning them. In addition, as the lean tissues begin to shrink, they become weaker and perform less metabolic work, reducing energy expenditure even more. Hormones will also slow down the body metabolism to conserve lean body tissue.



03

Can I skip breakfast and compensate by eating a little more during lunch and dinner, and still lose weight?

It is not advisable to skip any of the meals, particularly breakfast. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day after long hours of non-ingestion of food. Our body metabolism will slow down during sleep and if the ingestion of food were to be delayed longer, the slowed metabolism will have a tough time digesting the food. In addition, by ingesting an oversized meal, this slowed metabolism will take a longer time to digest the oversized meal and this may result in weight gain instead of weight loss due to an excessive amount of calories in the form of fat being stored in the body.



04

Will I lose weight if I just drink coffee for breakfast and eat lunch and dinner as per normal?

Coffee is not considered as a proper meal replacement because it does not supply essential macronutrients such as complex carbohydrate as the main source of energy for breakfast. Our body can digest liquid faster as compared to solid food. Hence if it's only a cup of coffee at breakfast, the hunger pangs may strike earlier, before the next meal and cause overeating at next meal, unintentionally.



05

If I over-eat at breakfast, lunch or dinner, does it help if I skip the next meal?

Weight loss can only be achieved when energy input (calorie intake) is less than energy output (exercise/ metabolism rate/ activity level). If the calories intake in two meals is equivalent to the energy intake in 3 meals, and the energy output is moderate, it is unlikely to be able to achieve weight loss.



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Yoomi bottles with Feeding System

The yoomi 3-in-1 feeding system is a premium easi-latch bottle, a travel warmer and a bedside warmer in one compact and stylish package. At the touch of a button, Yoomi warms baby's milk to the natural temperature of breastmilk in just 60 seconds.



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Mount Alvernia **SG 50** Bundle of Joy Gift Set

In celebration of Singapore's Jubilee Year and the arrival of your new born, we have a special Mount Alvernia SG50 Bundle of Joy gift set for mothers who deliver in Mount Alvernia Hospital. The gift set includes SG50 baby gifts and accessories that have been lovingly put together.

Mothers will also be presented with the limited edition Alvernia Ladies Jubilee Card that comes with bountiful privileges and benefits .

Singapore Golden Jubilee Baby Gift Set

- Commemorative medallion
- Multi-functional shawl
- Baby sling
- Children's book
- Family photo frame
- A set of baby clothes including two rompers, a toddler t-shirt and matching shorts.
- Diaper bag
- Scrapbook for memories

Exclusively for Singapore Citizens.
For more information, please visit www.heybaby.sg/sg50baby or email your queries to SG50baby@msf.gov.sg

We have lovingly put together the following:

- Limited Edition Medallion
- POSB Smiley Gift Bag
- Mount Alvernia Diaper Bag
- BabyCare New Mum's Gift
- Baby Night Light
- Feeding Shawl and Baby Blanket



Front & back view of the limited edition medallion.



Baby Night Light



Complimentary 2 year membership. Terms and conditions apply.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Images are not to scale. Issue of Mount Alvernia SG50 Baby Jubilee Gift Set is applicable for all babies born from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015. Please note that the benefits are correct as listing on April 2015, subjected to change without prior notice.



Last year, health screening saved my life

The early detection followed by treatment and good control of the condition helps me cope with my illness and lowers further risk of serious complications. Knowing my health status is a first step to a better life, better health.

Service Assurance

We know getting the right results are important. If additional tests are required, we help our patients make informed decisions by being transparent.

Our Health Screening packages start from \$86 (Inclusive of Goods & Services Tax)

The health screening includes

- Medical Consultation
- Cholesterol, Gout, Kidney and Sugar (Glucose)
- Resting Electrocardiogram (ECG) and other Lab Tests

Make an appointment today

Call us at 6347 6215

EMAIL hsc@mtalvernia-hospital.org

VISIT www.mtalvernia-hospital.org/health-screening

HEALTH SCREENING CENTRE OPERATING HOURS

Mon to Fri: 8am to 5pm | Saturday: 8am to 1pm | Sun & PH: Closed

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Serve all with Love