

Healthy Living For Mind & Body

# My Alvernia

• Issue 5 •



## No more Chest Pains for *Superman*

### WHAT'S UP DOC

Gastric Pain –  
Don't Stomach It

### THE BIG INTERVIEW

Under Pressure  
– Hypertension



**I**n end April, we unveiled new facilities within the hospital grounds. Besides presenting a refreshing and more vibrant campus, the new facilities allow us to better provide for our customers. In particular, we are happy that the new inpatient rooms have been well received and utilized by patients. We thank you for your continued support and feedback. Do continue to share your thoughts and comments with us so that we can continue to make improvements to serve you better.

One additional facility that you can look out for over the next few months is the new Parentcraft Centre. This is an initiative that we have added based on your feedback to expand our Parentcraft services. The centre will provide services ranging from care during pregnancy to preparing for childbirth and basic care of the newborn. There will also be experienced consultants around to share tips and provide training on breastfeeding and baby care skills, along with baby massage classes and breastfeeding support for caregivers.

As part of the hospital's community outreach efforts, we have recently expanded our health screening activities to Catholic churches in addition to our ongoing outreach to serve the elderly. So far, we have carried out the health screenings in two churches and another one is coming up in August. We are grateful to the churches for giving us the opportunity to work with them to serve the community.

These outreach efforts will help us build stronger ties with the community and help spread the message of being proactive in managing one's health. We look forward to working with more community partners to carry out such projects.

**Khoo Chow Huat**  
CEO, Mount Alvernia Hospital

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A NOTE OF THANKS

# Child's Play

**F**or any doting mother, witnessing your beloved child crying in pain is extremely heartbreaking, not to mention watching him get stitches on his gashing wound.

Thinking back at an accident which happened about a year ago, Mdm Deepa Balji remembered how appreciative she felt when the nurses at Mount Alvernia Hospital persuaded her to wait outside while they stitched up the wound on 10-month-old Arrian's tiny lower lip.

"I was very touched when they asked if I wanted to sit outside while they stitched up his wound," said Mdm Balji. "They realised that for any mother, it is painful to see your child in excruciating pain."



*No more tears and no more scars. Arrian gets a cuddle from mom.*

The accident happened one evening when Mdm Balji and her husband took Arrian to the playground and put him on a swing. Though it was considered fairly safe, the first-time parents were caught off-guard when the little boy released his grip on the chains of the swing and fell to the ground, hitting his face against the stone tiles.

Mdm Balji recalled, "I remember the fall vividly. He was crying, screaming in pain and blood splattered all over the pavement."

The couple rushed the injured toddler to the 24 Hour Walk-in Clinic & Emergency Department at Mount Alvernia Hospital immediately and was attended to as an emergency case. Mdm Balji was extremely grateful for the quick response of the staff at the Clinic and the many thoughtful ways in which the nurses tried to distract Arrian with toys and even switched on the television for him, in order to calm him down.

"The way the nurses treated Arrian and their display of empathy towards me, a worried mother, helped to calm me down a great deal," shared Mdm Balji gratefully.

To show their appreciation towards the hospital and the staff who attended to Arrian, the couple sent a thank you card to the nurses after the incident.

Now, Arrian is a bouncy and rambunctious 18-month-old who has recovered well without any visible scars – both physically and emotionally. "When we brought him back to the 'crime scene' where the accident happened, he was smiling and has no recollection of his bad fall at all!"



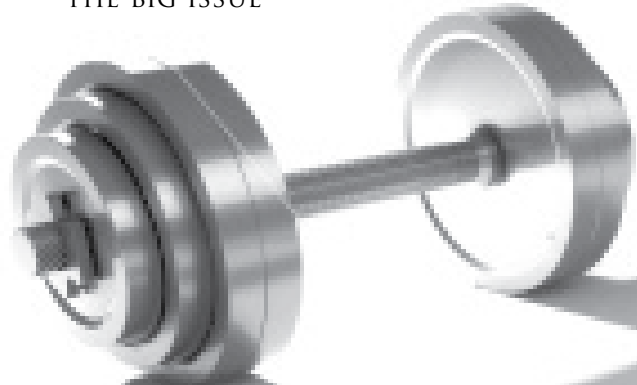
*Back in action: Arrian strikes a pose as a downward dog.*



Do you have a Mount Alvernia story to share? We'd love to hear from you. Email us at [myalvernia@mtalvernia-hospital.org](mailto:myalvernia@mtalvernia-hospital.org)

# No more Chest Pains

Seeking proper medical attention in time probably saved his life. Thanks to timely intervention and a change in diet, heart patient Cliff Teo is now in better shape and back to the sporty lifestyle he loves so much.



# Weight off his chest

**C**hatting with Mr Cliff Teo, it's hard not to be infected by his energy and optimism. Not too long ago, the father of two grown up sons was overweight at 107kg and needed surgery to treat a heart condition. Fast forward to today and you can find the 54-year old lifting weights with ease and working out on the cross-trainer at the gym in his condominium.

But Cliff's story is no overnight sensation. He got to where he is today through sheer dogged determination and discipline. To some extent, he also has the strong foundation he laid in his younger days as an active sportsman and Navy regular to thank for his remarkable recovery.

## First line of Defence

No direct medical intervention was required immediately, but Dr Tan prescribed a concoction of medications and advised Cliff to make immediate lifestyle changes to bring his weight down. It was a wake up call for the man whose friends call him 'Superman'.

No longer in denial about his condition, Cliff set his mind on improving his health, cutting down on seafood, fried foods and curries. After consulting with the doctor, Cliff continued his gym workouts but followed a moderated exercise plan.

The commitment to a managed diet and regular exercise soon paid off. Within six months, Cliff lost 15 kg and brought his weight down to 92kg. Meanwhile he continued to see Dr Tan every three months for regular review sessions.

During one such regular review earlier this year, tests showed a progression in the narrowing of the arteries.

## A Close Shave

It all began in 2007 when he accompanied his late wife, Kit Ping to see a doctor at Mount Alvernia Hospital. While at the hospital, Cliff felt acute chest pains. At his wife's insistence, Cliff headed over to the hospital's 24 Hour Walk-in Clinic & Emergency Department and was advised to be admitted for observation.

Truth be told, it was not the first time Cliff had been struck with such pains. For some time, he had been experiencing recurring tightness around the chest area and felt significant discomfort whenever he exercised.

"Whenever I went jogging around the estate, my chest literally felt like it was going to explode, especially during the first five minutes of exercising," he admitted.

Though the discomfort subsided as he eased into the run, Cliff instinctively knew that something was wrong, but he shrugged it off.

Fortunately for Cliff, the doctors were able to diagnose the problem in time.

Upon admission to hospital, Interventional Cardiologist Dr Tan Kok Soon ordered a battery of tests, including a stress test, ECG and treadmill sessions.

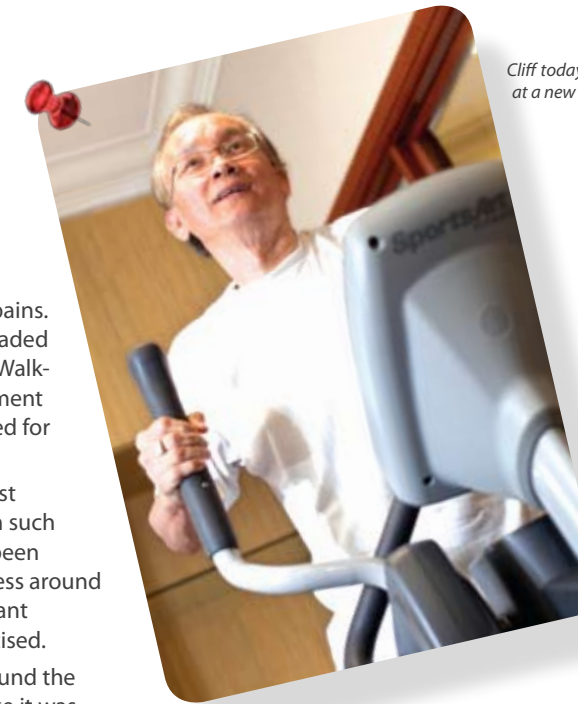
The results showed about 70 per cent blockages of three sub arteries and complete blockage of his capillaries.

## Surgical Options

This time, Dr Tan advised Cliff to consider a coronary angioplasty – a procedure in which surgeons use a balloon to widen a blocked heart artery, then implant a small, stainless steel tube (stent) to hold the artery open and improve blood flow.

This was the first option. Cliff's second option was heart bypass surgery.

Like any patient, Cliff had his share of questions and concerns. He asked Dr Tan



Cliff today: still active but at a new pace.

## 'Superman' Back on Track

Four months after the procedure, Cliff no longer experiences chest pains and tightness. He is now able to clock longer mileage on the exercise machines and is back to his routine of evening jogs, swims and gym work three to four times a week. His weight at last check was 79kg.

"I definitely feel a lot better than before but now that I am more aware of my physical limitations, I try to be extra cautious and avoid pushing myself too hard. After all, I'm not competing with anyone else."

Cliff must also continue to pay close attention to his diet, stay disciplined with regular exercise and take his medications as prescribed.

Having grown wiser from his own personal experience, Cliff now takes every opportunity to remind friends and loved ones to guard their health.

"Most people think 'It won't happen to me' but health is something you can't predict and sickness does not discriminate against anyone."

whether a less invasive procedure like angioplasty meant it was less effective than a more invasive operation but Dr Tan assured him that was not the case.

He explained that it was prudent to go for the less invasive procedure first as that might solve the problem without the need for more major surgery that would involve more risk and a longer recovery period.

"Dr Tan is a very discerning doctor who goes beyond what is expected to reassure his patients. He was very receptive to my questions and took me through the pros and cons of all the options available," recalled a grateful Cliff.

True to his Superman reputation, fearless Cliff opted against anaesthesia for his operation, choosing instead to remain conscious throughout the two-hour procedure.

"I was very calm," recalled Cliff. "I was chatting with Dr Tan the whole time and could see what he was doing and exactly what was going on. Dr Tan is extremely careful and precise. I trusted and felt very comfortable with him."



Cliff at 30 years old when he weighed 80kg.

Dr Tan Kok Soon is based at Tan Kok Soon Heart Specialist Clinic at Mount Alvernia Medical Centre (Blk A, Unit #06-06). Tel: (+65) 6358 0650.

# A closer look at what's inside



**m**any people are familiar with the term “X-ray” but with advances in technology, the broader term of “diagnostic imaging” more accurately describes the wide array of radiological tools available today to examine the insides of the human body.

With the evolution of medicine, imaging techniques are no longer just used for diagnostic purposes. They can also be used for treatment or therapeutic purposes. Welcome to the world of Interventional Radiology (IR).

With the use of radiological imaging such as Ultrasound, X-ray and CT Scan, IR procedures are basically minimally invasive procedures performed using radiological image guidance and involve small punctures in the body instead of big surgical cuts.

## BENEFITS

Dr Lin Shueh En, Consultant Radiologist with special interest in Interventional Radiology, Department of Diagnostic Imaging, Mount Alvernia Hospital explained the key benefit to patients.

“IR creates a smaller wound and results in faster recovery, shorter hospital stay and lower hospitalisation cost,” he said.

According to Dr Lin, 39, the use of radiological imaging guidance makes procedures safer than the old method of “going by feel and anatomical landmarks”.

Though generally considered safe, IR is not completely without risk. Complications that could occur include bleeding, infection or allergies to the drugs used for the procedure. However, Dr Lin assured that the risk of such complications is low.

As with other medical procedures, IR is safe when used with care. Radiologists have been trained to use the minimum amount of radiation necessary to obtain the needed results. The amount of radiation used in most examinations is very small and the benefits greatly outweigh the risk of harm.

Dr Lin recounts a memorable incident where a young patient in his late 20s suffered a bad laceration on his liver due to a serious traffic accident. Despite several attempts, the surgeons in the operating theatre were unable to stop the excessive bleeding and referred the case to Dr Lin for help. Using IR, Dr Lin located the artery that leads to the liver and blocked off the blood flow with a method called “coiling” – using metal coils to block off the artery and stop the bleeding. It worked and the patient was discharged in less than two weeks.

“IR basically saved his life, if not he could have lost it due to excessive bleeding,” recalled Dr Lin. “It was a dramatic incident but it emphasised the practical benefits of IR. In this case, IR complements what conventional surgery is not able to achieve.”



## Going in for the fix

**How Interventional Radiology can be used:**

**Drug delivery:** By inserting small tubes into the veins, drugs can be administered to a target organ. For e.g. in cancer treatment to deliver drugs directly to a tumour through its blood supply.

**Drainage and unclogging:** By inserting small tubes into the relevant part of the body, IR can drain off abnormal fluid collections such as pus, bile (from blocked bile ducts) or urine (from obstructed kidneys).

**Unblocking blocked Fallopian tubes** using small catheters and wires.

**Removing tumours:** During Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA), heat is used to destroy tumour cells.

# Vegetables? No problem!

Tearing your hair out over how to get your kid to eat anything close to a balanced diet? Our nutrition expert has some tips.



**i**

f meal time dramas are a common sight in your household, you are not alone. Getting used to meal times, trying new foods, adjusting to unfamiliar textures and flavours is unsettling for many children, especially toddlers.

At the same time, preparing meals that are left uneaten and constantly having to cajole the picky one to take even one bite can be stressful for parents and caregivers.

According to Mr For Wei Chek, Manager, Nutrition and Dietetics Services at Mount Alvernia Hospital, common complaints range from difficulty in introducing new foods to an aversion for certain types,

especially green, leafy vegetables, as well as wholemeal varieties like brown rice and wholegrain breads.

Wei Chek said that toddlers are resistant to the concept of trying new foods mainly because of fear. “Pressure from parents and force feeding will only make things worse,” he cautioned.

Other explanations could be organic causes like oral motor dysfunction which makes it difficult to swallow certain types of food; a gradual assertion of independence and wanting a say in what he eats; peer pressure which leads to choosiness; and perhaps a previous unpleasant experience like choking.

For a child to develop the right eating habits, Wei Chek stressed the importance of addressing this problem. “Getting your child to eat a variety of food is important to ensure a well-balanced diet and adequate nutrition,” he advised.

“Unhealthy or improper eating habits that are not corrected will spill over to adulthood which become even harder to change.”

However parents can take heart. According to Wei Chek, most children will grow out of this behaviour by the age of six.



Mr For Wei Chek

## Strategies to coax fussy eaters

**Let him be the boss** Ask your kid what he wants to eat. During your next grocery shopping trip, let him take over the trolley and have a say in picking out new things that he is keen to try. If he chooses it, he will at least take a bite.

**Make it fun** Get him involved in the preparation of the food. Have fun together cutting up the vegetables or fruits into different shapes and sizes. Combine different food with bright colours and make the dish “interesting to eat”.

**Mix it up** If he shuns the dish once he notices a particular ingredient, try a different way of cooking. Some alternatives include pureeing or mashing and mixing it together with porridge or other types of his favourite food.

**Encourage, not punish** Load up the praises when he eats well or tries out new food. Even if he rejects it for the first time, do not lash out. Instead, try again a week later and do so in small portions.

**Adopt a routine** Kids crave familiarity. Plan regular mealtimes and keep to small but frequent meals with snacks in between to supplement their main diet. Examples of healthy snacks include milk, soy bean milk, cheese, fruits, fruit juices, pudding and yoghurt.



For dietary consultation, please contact our Nutrition & Dietetics Department at (+65) 6347 6702.



The Mount Alvernia Parentcraft Centre is located at Level 2 of the main hospital, next to the St Gabriel Children's Ward. For inquiries, please call (+65) 6347 6641.



# Welcome to our new Parentcraft Centre *Opening Soon*

Mount Alvernia's new Parentcraft Centre is a one-stop parentcraft and lactation centre for parents with newborns. Here are some of the services and facilities you can look forward to:



Consultation Room

### **A Welcoming Environment**

Designed with comfort in mind, the ParentCraft Centre features a cosy waiting area and beverage corner along with a mini library of breastfeeding resources, reading materials and magazines for leisure browsing. You can also pick up some breastfeeding related items which are on sale.

### **A Private Space**

Softly lit and cosy, the new Parentcraft Centre is equipped with a Baby Changing Room, two Consultation Rooms and Training Room. Here, you can breastfeed in privacy under the guidance of our experienced Lactation Consultants.

### **Personal Guidance**

Mount Alvernia Hospital advocates breastfeeding and we believe all mothers can achieve successful breastfeeding with a little help. Under the leadership of the Centre's Manager Ms Kang Phaik Gaik, a renown Singapore breastfeeding expert, a team of specially trained Lactation Consultants and Parentcraft Counsellors is on hand to assist.

### **Learning the Ropes**

Our new Parentcraft Centre caters for the whole spectrum of ante-natal care, childbirth education and newborn baby care. Services include:

- Antenatal Consultation
- Childbirth Education
- Postnatal Services
- Breastfeeding (1-1 Consultation or Group Supervision)
- Breastfeeding Mothers Support Group
- Home Visits
- Outpatient Consultation
- Baby Massage
- Bathing Baby
- Care of Newborn
- Mother & Baby nutrition
- Weaning
- Confinement Nanny / Caregiver training



# Don't Stomach It

It affects practically everyone and sometimes gets confused with other medical conditions. What exactly is 'gastric' pain and what can be done about it? Consultant Gastroenterologist Dr Chew Chay Noi shares her expert advice with *My Alvernia*.



Dr Chew Chay Noi and her collection of 'Doctor Bears'

### What is 'gastric' pain?

'Gastric' pain is a general term often used to refer to pain in the upper abdomen (below the ribs and above the navel) which is related to meals.

### Who is susceptible to 'gastric' pain?

No one is exempt from gastric problems. Young people including children, teenagers, adults and the elderly can all be plagued by gastric problems.

Patients who are taking aspirin to prevent heart attacks or strokes; or strong painkillers, have a higher risk of developing stomach and duodenal ulcers.

Smokers and highly stressed individuals are more prone to gastric problems.

People who have contracted *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacterium that colonizes the stomach wall, have an increased incidence of stomach and duodenal ulcers.

### What are some of the common gastric problems you have come across in your practice?

Gastro oesophageal reflux disease caused by the reflux of gastric acid from the stomach upwards into the oesophagus or gullet, is an increasingly common cause of 'gastric pain' in the patients I see in my practice.

Peptic ulcer disease with associated stomach or duodenal ulcers is another common cause of 'gastric pain'.

Some patients complain of troublesome 'gastric pain' but are found to have no organic cause for their pain. This is known as 'Non-Ulcer Dyspepsia' or 'Functional Dyspepsia' and forms a substantial proportion of the patients who come to see me for 'gastric pain'.

Patients with symptomatic gallstone disease due to stones in the gallbladder or bile ducts often complain of pain in the upper abdomen which is mistaken for 'gastric pain'.

Other less common causes of 'gastric pain' I see in my practice include hepatitis, pancreatitis and cancers of the oesophagus, stomach, liver and pancreas.

### What about 'heartburn'?

'Heartburn' is caused by gastro oesophageal reflux and is characterised by a 'burning' sensation in the upper abdomen which radiates up the chest. Patients may also burp excessively or feel a sour taste in the back of their mouths. Patients are often alarmed by 'heartburn' and sometimes consult a cardiologist because they fear they may be suffering from a heart attack.

### You mentioned that digestive disease problems are very common and on the rise in Singapore.

Yes, digestive diseases such as gastro oesophageal reflux disease are indeed becoming increasingly prevalent in affluent countries such as Singapore. This may be related to lifestyle habits such as irregular meals and overeating. Consumption of coffee, tea, oily and fried foods, excessive garlic and onions, spicy foods, alcohol, tomato-based foods and mint also predispose to gastro oesophageal reflux.



### When is 'gastric pain' serious enough to necessitate seeing a doctor?

Pain and discomfort in the upper abdomen, which is related to meals, loss of appetite, feeling of excessive fullness or bloating after meals, excessive belching, nausea or vomiting are often symptoms that point to a 'gastric' problem. If these complaints persist beyond two weeks and are not relieved by over-the-counter medications, one should seek medical attention.

Vomiting of black, 'coffee-ground' material or fresh blood or the passage of black faeces necessitate an urgent referral to a gastroenterologist as they indicate bleeding from the upper digestive system.

'Gastric pain' that is severe enough to wake one from sleep requires further investigations. Another red flag is significant loss of weight in patients with 'gastric pain' who are above 40 years of age and this warrants a consultation with a gastroenterologist.

A sedentary, stressful and hectic lifestyle, obesity and reclining soon after a meal also make one more prone to gastro oesophageal reflux. Late dinners, suppers, buffets and evening banquets should also be avoided in patients suffering from gastro oesophageal reflux.

### Can some medications actually cause gastric pain?

Strong painkillers, steroids and some antibiotics can cause gastric pain.

### From your experience, are most 'gastric' conditions curable?

This depends on the actual cause of the 'gastric pain'.

Stomach and duodenal ulcers are treated with medications that reduce gastric acid production. A course of treatment for four to 12 weeks is usually sufficient to heal these ulcers. As a general rule, stomach ulcers must be followed up with repeat gastroscopy to ensure healing as some stomach ulcers may be cancerous. If patients are found to harbour *Helicobacter pylori* in their stomachs, the bacteria should be eradicated to reduce recurrence of the ulcers.

Patients with early oesophageal and stomach cancers can be cured by surgery. Patients who have gallstones causing symptoms can also be cured by surgical removal of their gallbladders.

It is often difficult to cure patients with 'Functional Dyspepsia' in whom no organic cause is found for their symptoms. For such patients, good patient-doctor rapport is essential. Reassurance, anxiety-relieving drugs and sometimes the prescription of anti-depressants may help alleviate their symptoms.

### What are some common diagnostic procedures and how safe are they?

Gastroscopy is often used to investigate the cause of 'gastric pain'. The procedure involves the introduction of a flexible tube with a lighted bulb through the patient's mouth to visualize the lining of the oesophagus, stomach and duodenum. Gastroscopy is generally a very safe procedure. It enables the endoscopist to obtain biopsies of the affected areas.

Patients who are unfit for gastroscopy, such as those suffering from serious and unstable heart and lung conditions may be investigated by radiological tests such as a barium meal.

Ultrasound scans and CT scans are used to diagnose gallstone disease and tumours of the liver and pancreas.

Dr Chew Chay Noi is based at C N Chew Internal Medicine & Gastroenterology Clinic at Mount Alvernia Medical Centre (Blk A, Unit #01-05). Tel: (+65) 6356 2607.

## Laughter The Best Medicine

A motorcycle cop was rushed to the hospital with an inflamed appendix.

The doctors operated on him and assured him that all was well. However, he kept feeling something pulling at the hairs on his chest. Worried that it might be a second surgery that the doctors hadn't told him about, he finally got enough energy to pull down his hospital gown so he could look at what was making him so uncomfortable.

Taped firmly across his hairy chest were three wide strips of adhesive tape, written in large black letters was the sentence, "Get well soon! Love, from the nurse you gave a ticket to last week!"



## New Doctors & Clinics

### GENERAL SURGERY

#### Dr Chen Chung Ming

Sub-specialty : Colorectal  
Clinic : Nobel Surgery Centre  
Add : Medical Centre A, #05-02  
Tel : (+65) 6256-1737

### ORTHOAEDIC SURGERY

#### Dr Lim Kay Kiat

Sub-specialty : Foot and Ankle Surgery  
Clinic : Synergy Orthopaedic Group  
Add : Medical Centre A, #02-23  
Tel : (+65) 6251-2822

#### Dr Benedict Peng Chan Wearn

Sub-specialty : Spine Specialist  
Clinic : Island Orthopaedic Consultants  
Add : Medical Centre A, #01-04  
Tel : (+65) 6356-0588

### NEUROSURGERY

#### Prof Timothy Lee

Sub-specialty : Brain Tumour and Spine  
Clinic : The Brain And Spine Clinic  
Add : Medical Centre A, #02-23  
Tel : (+65) 6472-2022

### OPHTHALMOLOGY

#### Dr James Pan Chuan-Hsin

Sub-specialty : Cornea, External Eye Diseases and Refractive Surgery  
Clinic : Nobel Eye & Vision Centre  
Add : Medical Centre A, #05-01  
Tel : (+65) 6352-7188

### RESPIRATORY MEDICINE

#### Dr Jim Teo Yeow Kwan

Sub-specialty : Intensive Care Medicine  
Clinic : Nobel Chest and Internal Medicine Centre  
Add : Medical Centre A, #05-02  
Tel : (+65) 6256-9923

First on  Find us on Facebook

Mount Alvernia is proud to announce that we are now on Facebook, the first private hospital in Singapore to do so. Join our online community and get the latest tip-offs on Alvernia happenings by signing up as a fan today. It's easy!

#### How to join the Alvernia Facebook community:

1. Click on [www.facebook.com/mtalverniahospital](http://www.facebook.com/mtalverniahospital) to get to MAH Facebook page.
2. Login to your Facebook account to connect with MAH. If you do not have a Facebook account, click on the green "Sign Up" button at the top-left corner of page to create one.
3. Click on the "Like" button with the thumbs-up to be a fan of MAH Facebook.



### Online Pre-admission

Expedite your admission process and avoid having your forms lost in the mail by submitting your pre-admission forms online! All you need are the patient and next of kin's particulars, date of admission, doctor's name and you are all set.

Just log on to [www.mtalvernia-hospital.org/preadmission.asp](http://www.mtalvernia-hospital.org/preadmission.asp)

## Medical Advisory Board 2010

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Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr Christopher Chong  
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General Surgeon

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Dr Leslie Leong : Orthopaedic Surgeon  
Dr Choo Shu May : Anaesthetist  
Dr Ong Eng Keow : Paediatrician



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Mr Khoo Chow Huat, Dr Ching Kwok Choy  
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Dr Simon Ng, Dr Ong Eng Keow, Dr Julian Theng,  
Dr Choo Shu May  
Absent:  
Dr Freddy Teo, Dr Loh Meng Woei, Dr Tan Kok Soon

### METHOD:

1. Heat the cooking oil up in a wok.
2. Add in the shallots and fry till golden brown. Remove from wok and set aside.
3. Reheat the oil and add in the salt. Fry till golden brown.
4. Add in the garlic and fry till lightly brown.
5. Add in the rice and all the remaining ingredients.
6. Lower the fire and stir fry the ingredients, mixing well.
7. Increase the fire to high heat and toss the rice evenly from the bottom.
8. Fry for another 5 mins or till rice turns fragrant.
9. Turn off the fire and mix in the fried shallots.

### INGREDIENTS:

1kg Steamed jasmine rice  
120g Char siew, diced  
100g Shrimps, cooked  
50g Green peas  
30g Shitake mushrooms  
2 Eggs, beaten  
20g Garlic, chopped  
20g Shallots, sliced  
1 tsp Salt  
1 tsp Light soya sauce  
3g Sesame oil  
100g Chicken powder  
80ml Cooking oil

Serves 4

### NUTRITION CONTENT:

One serving will give:  
694 kilocalories energy  
27g protein  
28g fat  
160mg cholesterol  
84g carbohydrate  
3.4g fibre  
1066mg sodium

DELICIOUSLY  
HEALTHY



## YANG ZHOU FRIED RICE

### Health Tip

Increase the fibre content of this dish by adding more vegetables such as peas, shallots and mushroom to the fried rice.





# under pressure

It's a common condition but if left untreated, hypertension or high blood pressure (BP) can lead to serious complications. Mount Alvernia based kidney specialist Dr Stephen Chew bares the facts and shares some health tips for good kidney health.



Dr Stephen Chew

**H**ypertension is a 'deceptive disease' according to Dr Stephen Chew (above), a Consultant Nephrologist and Physician with over 22 years of experience and a specialty in renal medicine.

"It does not mean that the higher your blood pressure, the more discomfort or obvious symptoms you will experience," he cautioned. "You can have a high BP but still feel perfectly all right. But it does not take away the injury to your vital organs or the adverse impact that hypertension is causing your body in the long term."

The point is: Do not rely on symptoms because hypertension is one of the classic a-symptomatic conditions that can hit you with no obvious signs. Though dizziness and aches are some common symptoms of a hypertension condition, these are not specific and can be indicative of other medical conditions.

The normal range of human blood pressure is 140 (systolic)/90 (diastolic) so anything above this reading is considered hypertension. Stress and tension can cause temporary increase in blood pressure, but for the most part, hypertension tends to be a medical condition that afflicts people above the age of 40.

Even for people whose BP readings are within the 'acceptable' range, there is a subgroup of patients – people with diabetes, protein in their urine, patients with chronic kidney dysfunction or those with existing cardiac conditions – where a BP reading of 130/80 is considered high because their threshold to internal injury is much lower.

## VIGILANCE

Though hypertension is not a reversible condition, it can be controlled and maintained with medication and appropriate lifestyle intervention. Dr Chew said that if done well and consistently, hypertension will not affect a patient's daily life.

The doctor's advice: even if you have no obvious symptoms or discomfort, develop a habit of doing regular self-monitoring of your BP at home once a week instead of waiting till the next clinic visit or medical appointment.

"Regular measurement of your blood pressure at home using a portable blood pressure monitor is better and more effective at managing hypertension than one taken during a single clinic visit," said Dr Chew.

Such vigilance may be well worth the while. Although hypertension is not immediately life-threatening, it is a high risk factor that can lead to serious illnesses like renal failure and cardiac diseases, if left untreated.

Dr Chew added that sometimes, blood pressure can rise to a very high level before it is detected because the patient experiences no symptoms. When that happens, medications have to be given to keep the condition under control and prevent further injury to the organs.

## TREATMENT

Since hypertension is often associated with a cluster of co-existing problems, the treatment of hypertension does not only involve lowering the blood pressure it is also important to reduce other risk factors that jointly contribute to the consequences like cardiac diseases and renal failure, or those that add up to cause injury to the body. These include controlling the blood sugar level, cholesterol and uric acid.

And what can you do to reduce the risk? Plenty - watch your diet, reduce obesity, exercise and adopt a healthy, smoke-free lifestyle. It also helps to be proactive – take an interest in your own health by doing measuring your BP regularly with a home - use blood pressure monitor, go for regular health checks, and take your hypertension medication as prescribed.

Dr Chew sums up the battle plan with three key approaches: Prevention, Early Detection and Intervention. "It is possible to achieve control over your medical condition," he assured.

## TIPS for a healthy BP



**Diet** Diet alone has a huge impact on blood pressure. The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet emphasizes reductions in salt and saturated fats, both of which independently reduce blood pressure. Fish and white meat like chicken are examples of foods low in saturated fats. Pork, beef, egg yolk and butter are examples of foods high in saturated fats.

**Take your prescribed medication regularly** The purpose of hypertension medication is to maintain smooth control of the BP with little side effects and minimal disruption to the patient's daily life. It's not a one-size-fits-all method and doctors will order the optimum combination of drugs to deliver maximum benefit for the individual patient.

**Exercise and keep fit** A simple and drug-free approach to controlling hypertension is to engage in moderate-intensity physical activity two to three times a week. Exercise programmes that involve endurance activities such as walking, jogging, cycling and swimming, coupled with resistance training can vastly improve BP levels and reduce obesity.

**Stay away from smoking** This is dangerous if you have hypertension. Smoking can acutely raise BP levels and eventually cause serious conditions like heart diseases. If you have problems quitting, seek medical advice.

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# Touch of an Angel

**H**eavy hearts, teary eyes, fear and worry of family and friends are encounters that Ms Ee Siew Lay has grown very accustomed to in her 30 years of serving at Mount Alvernia Hospital.

After all, as a daughter, wife and mother herself, she can fully empathise with the feelings of every person who walks in. "We treat every patient here as a relative," said the Senior Manager who heads the hospital's Operating Theatres (OT).

"We are all someone to somebody. We hope that families will see us as warm human beings with feelings too and feel safe in the knowledge that there is a team of caring professionals who will do their utmost to take care of the people they love," shared Ms Ee.

Though many people cringe at the thought of the OT and have the perception that it is a cold and impersonal place, Ms Ee makes it a point to counter this misconception in the way she trains her staff, emphasising the importance of touch and communication with patients.

"Every time a patient is wheeled in here, we make it a point to take off our masks so that they can see our faces. This is very important because we have only one minute to make eye contact with the patient and get him to trust us with his life," she said. "It is not unusual for us to hold their hands and say a prayer for them so that they feel reassured before going under."

The little ones are pampered with special attention using balloons and toys to distract them from the impending procedure. "Most children are not afraid but it's the parents who are more worried," explained Ms Ee. "The key here is to make the child happy as this helps to reassure the anxious parents."

As much as Ms Ee and her team strive to make the experience a more reassuring and pleasant one for the patients and their loved ones, she added that working in the OT is highly stressful as "everything should be done yesterday and not today".

The ability to think on one's feet and be ever ready to deal with sudden situations is an important aspect of the job. "It only takes a couple of minutes to kill a patient should you accidentally disconnect any equipment and fail to rectify the situation in time," said the experienced nurse who was awarded the Merit Award for Nurses on Nurses Day last year. This award is given to nurses who have made significant contributions to the nursing profession.

It is also this aspect of vigilance that makes it almost natural for everyone in the OT to watch out for one another, fostering bonding and a shared purpose in the process.

"In OT, we're like family as have seen each other through many ups and downs in life," shared Ms Ee. "Here, everything we do for the patient is done quietly behind the scenes, but it is most rewarding to be able to do our jobs well as we know we are making a difference in the lives of many."



Ms Ee Siew Lay



The OT Family at Mount Alvernia



## STEP UP TO GOOD HEALTH

There are many reasons why people go for a thorough medical check-up. Some are health conscious. Others are vigilant, aware that sudden illness can strike without warning.

Whatever the motivation, health screening is a proactive step to safeguarding one's health. It gives you a snapshot of your health status and lets you know how your body is doing from time to time. Done regularly, health screening is also your surest bet to detecting serious conditions for early treatment, before complications set in.

At Mount Alvernia, we want to help you stay in the pink. To cater to individual needs, we offer a wide range of packages, starting from our new Lean Screens (\$80-\$200 before GST) that provide the most essential health tests including blood analysis for cholesterol, glucose and uric acid, ECG heart check and consultation with a doctor. More comprehensive packages are also available (\$350 upwards before GST).

National Day Special (Jul - Aug)

\$45 - \$90 off selected packages

National Healthy Lifestyle Special (Sep - Oct)


15% off standard packages (Normal price: \$350 - \$1,200)



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Serve all with Love



*Adopt the pace of Nature  
her secret is patience*  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson ~

NATURE RAMBLES: Just behind Cafe 820 stands a row of shady trees - part of the garden that surrounds the hospital, and a stone's throw away from MacRitchie Reservoir.