THE 26TH COUNCIL WISHES ALL FAMILY PHYSICIANS

happy

WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY

19 MAY

COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS SINGAPORE

COPD, It's Out There!

by Adj Asst Prof Tan Tze Lee, President, 26th Council, College of Family Physicians Singapore

"*Lokun* ah, I have been coughing a lot, my sister says you are good with cough."

"How long have you been coughing?"

" It is my asthma *lah*, I ran out of my blue inhaler 3 weeks ago. Give me one."

"When did you start having your asthma?"

"Oh, 10 years ago, when I was 60 years old. I had a bad cough then and the doctor said I had asthma."

Hmm…… "Do you smoke?'

"No! Dirty habit! Anyway who got money to smoke?"

Intrigued, I had to delve a bit further into her past history. She had no past medical history of note, and none of her family had ever smoked. She was a housewife, and had 3 children by normal delivery. Apart from her "asthma", she had been very well.

"Where did you live?"

"Oh, I live in Jurong West with my husband and my unmarried daughter."

"What about before you got married?"

"I lived in Toa Payoh."

"In a HDB flat?"

Adj Asst Prof Tan Tze Lee (seated)

"Yes."

"What about when you were a child? Where did you live then?"

"I lived in a atap house in Hougang. My parents were farmers, we reared pigs."

"How long did you live there?"

"Until I got married *lor*."

"Who cook your food? Did you use gas, oil?"

"My mother! My sister and I helped her of course. My brothers could go out to play. We girls had to stay home and help mother. *Aiya*, who got money for gas? We use wood lor, dried grass, anything that can burn!"

"Oh! How did the smoke go out of the house?"

This time she looked at me with a bemused look. "Out of the window, where else?!"

"Auntie, I think I would like to do a lung blowing test for you…. I think you have a lung problem that was caused by the smoke you breathed in when you were young."

Spirometry was done for my 70-year-old lady who was previously diagnosed with asthma at the age of 60. The spirometry revealed severe irreversible airway obstruction,

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and confirmed the diagnosis of COPD (chronic obstructive airways disease). Further workup showed hyperinflated lungs, but nil else. She was treated with long-acting bronchodilators, vaccinations for pneumonia and influenza, and advice on exercise to improve her lung function. Over a period of months, she was improved all round, with improved CAT scores, spirometry, and effort tolerance.

COPD is a diagnosis most of us do not think of. I recall years ago asking a friend who has a clinic in a semi-industrial area to help screen for COPD in his area. "Huh? I have never seen COPD in my practice, don't have *lah*." Indeed. We have studies in the past which estimated that our COPD rates in Singapore are 3.5%.[1]

However, recent local population surveys revealed that 26% of chinese males over the age of 55 have evidence of COPD.[2]

Globally there is much evidence of the effects of indoor air pollution (IAP) leading to COPD.[3,4] Perhaps my "auntie" developed her COPD from her exposure to the smoke in her youth. Studies have shown that sustained exposures to IAP during childhood predisposes the developing juvenile lungs to develpop COPD. It is time we relook at COPD in our community, think about the possibilities, make the diagnosis, and treat.

It's out there, we just need to look out for it!

REFERENCES

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[2] Ng TP. Epidemiology of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Singapore Family Physician. Vol 39(2) Apr-June 2013 p 8-10

[3] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health accessed 6 January 2019.

[4] Kurmi OP, Semple S, Simkhada P, et al COPD and chronic bronchitis risk of indoor air pollution from solid fuel: a systematic review and meta-analysis Thorax 2010;65:221-228

■ CM

Interview with *Behrad Gorgani*

Interviewed by Dr Tan Li Wen Terence, Editorial Board Member

College Mirror (CM):
Hi Behrad, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. To start off, can I ask how you got started in Lutherie?

Behrad Gorgani (BG):
Hi Dr Tan, thank you so much for taking your time interviewing me.

This is an interesting question. I really don't know how it all happened, I was studying to get my bachelor's degree in Graphic Design at OCAD University. While there I was introduced to master luthier Phillip Davis, who was teaching guitar and violin construction in the university's woodshop. At the time I was still learning to play the guitar and the idea of making my own guitar was very exciting. So I started to make my first guitar with Phil's guidance and before I knew it I was working at the woodshop as a student technician as well as helping Phil with his class. Right there and then I knew that building guitars is something I'm really interested in.

Behrad Gorgani

CM:
Wonderful! And how has the journey been so far?

BG:
I would say it has been a very steep uphill journey, but certainly a rewarding one. I have had my instruments played on the BBC stage, used to record award-winning movie soundtracks. I've also had the amazing opportunity to teach instrument construction at the Art and Design University here in Toronto.

CM:
Could you tell a little more about the instruments you build and the teaching you do?

BG:
Sure, My background in design has taught me to always ask questions and try to solve problems. Since my early guitars, I've always experimented with more modern construction methods, such as multi-layered sides/ linings, to be able to create a more structurally stable instrument. Later after a couple of years of building and experimenting on my own, I decided to improve my understanding of guitars by studying with master luthiers, Sergei De Jonge, and Trevor Gore.

Sergei De Jonge taught me how to design simple yet musically powerful instruments. Trevor coming from an engineering background showed me tools and methods for