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which provided me an opportunity to put my many years of honed- skills to good use! I was blessed to be able to lead an enthusiastic and committed multi-disciplinary team to represent Punggol Polyclinic to take part in our inter-polyclinic competition, for which my team emerged champion! We have also been invited to perform for the upcoming 'SingHealth President's Challenge 2019 Grand Finale' which will be held at Oasis terrace, our second home! I am thrilled that I can continue to share my passion at my workplace! I am also fortunate to have a supportive boss who allows me to bring my hobby to my clinic, and occasionally joins in my training sessions too! There are ongoing plans to conduct regular aerobics sessions in my clinic after work due to the demand from my colleagues. I do hope the upcoming classes will bring joy to many more colleagues at work in the years to come!

CM



CHALLENGE TO CARE  
CHAPTER 2.14

## FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

*Embarking on a life as an overseas worker... means entering a seemingly endless cycle of longing – forever reaching for your dream abroad and pining for the home you've left behind.*  
— Aurora Almendral

*Many FDW's leave their home and their family to work in Singapore out of economic necessity.*

### Leaving the Children Behind

The drawing shows a woman cuddling a baby, with tears streaming down her face. The woman is probably the child's mother. Her bags are packed and there is an airplane in the background. This is a FDW going to work in a foreign land, leaving her young child behind.

No mother would choose to leave a helpless child behind if she could do otherwise. This woman is leaving her baby and heading to a strange new family, a different culture, and an uncertain community in a foreign land.

Will her child be well? Would the baby know her after two years? Will her husband take on a mistress? Will the money she sends home be wisely spent? Will she be exploited by her agent or her employer?

- Dr. Lily Aw

(continued on the next page)



This drawing was produced by third year medical students at Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore in 2012 CG15.

### Home Away from Home?

The Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics, a voluntary welfare organisation, has studied FDW psychosocial well-being and published the results in Home sweet home? Work, life and well-being of foreign domestic workers in Singapore in March 2015.

Several points from the executive summary are sobering reminders of the strain many of them feel they live under. For example, FDWs work an average of thirteen hours a day, and forty per cent do not have a weekly day off. For over half of the FDWs, their passports are kept in "safekeeping" by their employers. Almost a third of the FDWs have had their employers searching their room, their belongings, or their cellphone records. Almost three quarters of FDWs have experienced restrictions on telephone calls that they can make, or

restrictions to the people they may talk to, and also restrictions on their physical movements around the home and neighbourhood.

These are not easy conditions to work in, and are even more onerous if one is in unfamiliar surroundings, working for exacting employers that one may not be able to communicate smoothly with.

### About the Contributor

#### Contributor

**Lily Aw (MBBS 1980)** is the clinical lead for a Primary Care Network. For the past thirty years, she has driven across town from home to her clinic to attend to her patients. In the past year, however, her journey has included a stop to play with her granddaughter who has totally and irrevocably captured her heart! (2.13, 2.14)



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