

# Winner of AM•EI Golden Apple Award 2019 — A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock

Interviewed by Dr Fok Wai Yee Rose, MCFP(S), Editor (Team A)

The AM•EI Golden Apple Awards recognise and honour outstanding educators from SingHealth and Duke-NUS, who have demonstrated excellence in teaching.

College Mirror had the privilege of speaking with A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock, one of the 2019 award winners - who exemplifies the spirit of Generativity by actively giving back to the education landscape through nurturing and mentoring other educators.

A/Prof Lee was appointed the first Executive Director of the College of Family Physicians Singapore and tasked to revamp the educational activities of the College from 1998 to 2005. He played an instrumental role in the creation and development of the Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine in 2000, which is recognised today for its rigor and impact on improving the standard of family medicine in Singapore. He also served three full terms as President of the College from 2011 to 2017, during which various training programmes saw record enrolment numbers and improvement in standards.

## College Mirror (CM):

Congratulations, A/Prof Lee! Can you please share what determines the spirit of Generativity?

## A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock (LKH):

When I first learned from a senior colleague that I have been nominated for this award. I had mixed feelings. Winning an award often means that someone more deserving might have been overlooked. This is probably very true in the place where I work as there are so many excellent teachers there. So being given this very prestigious award sent me straight into the thick of the imposter syndrome. Secondly, I did not know the meaning of the word "Generativity" and had to google for it. This brought to mind the wise words of Laurence J Peter who observed that people in a hierarchy tend to rise to their level of incompetence. This could translate to something equivalent like people will eventually be given awards to the level that they are undeserving.

According to Wikipedia, the term generativity was coined by the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in 1950 to denote "a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation." After some reflection, I think the award is intended to recognise the need to facilitate the learning of others but in a very big way. Like through generations of learners.

## CM:

What were the education programmes you were involved in that related to your award?



A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock

## LKH:

The programmes were mostly related to the advancement of family medicine and encouraging young doctors to enter this field of need, not by default but by intentional scholarship. I had the privilege of being involved with the College pioneers that created the GDFM amidst much passive and active resistance to change. Likewise, we struggled to put up and then enhanced the Programme B of the MMed (Master of Medicine) as a path for practising family physicians to return to training and continue their goal of professional self-actualization. We went against conventional wisdom

and transformed our Fellowship (FCFP) from one based on election to one that is earned through structured training and a process of rigorous assessments. Our vision was validated when the Academy of Medicine Singapore accepted the qualification for admission as a Fellow of the Academy.

I also had the privilege of setting up a new programme for teaching family medicine to medical students when the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School was set up in 2006. We had a green field and I was given the opportunity to implement a longitudinal family medicine programme for medical students. I think a longitudinal approach is the best way to allow medical students to understand and appreciate the principles and value of family medicine and our emphasis on continuity of care.

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**CM:**

Can you share what are the essential components of a good and successful education programme? How do we evaluate and sustain such a programme?

**LKH:**

I do not believe in art for art's sake when it comes to education. Medical education and training must always have an end in mind and the product must be fit for purpose. "Purpose" itself changes with evolving needs of the patients we serve. The greatest challenge to successful programmes is when we become too enmeshed in our own theories which run the risk of becoming an idealized dogma of what family medicine should be. It then becomes de-linked with the needs of the community. Education should be based on the competency required to meet the healthcare needs of our population.

The acid test of a good and successful programme is the degree to which the product fit the purpose. I know it may be sound too mechanistic but it really is not, if we define purpose as the professional and compassionate care of patients.

The evaluation of education programmes should follow principles of implementation science. The outcome is the product of 3 factors:

The quality of the education programme, the way training is implemented/delivered and the support /resources available.

The best designed programme that is poorly implemented or given inadequate resources is doomed to failure.

Educators must therefore consider less-interesting things like logistics and financial viability if they really want to have a good and impactful programme.

**CM:**

Can you share any advice for budding educators who want to go the extra mile, like what you have achieved?

**LKH:**

My best advice is don't aim for awards. Award is nice but correlation is poor. At best, awards are associated with being a good educator. There is no evidence of a causal relationship between awards and being a good teacher. Focus on the learners and focus on the purpose. Academic promotions and awards will eventually come your way if you persevere along the career path of an educator.

If you really want to be a truly excellent educator, then be careful. Life may be hard and you will face resistance at all levels. You are likely to be misunderstood by your seniors and peers. Promotions and awards will not be easy to come by. If you are true to yourself, you may even be passed over for promotions or awards. That itself might even be a sign that you are truly excellent.

History taught us that Confucius was humiliated by the Duke of Lu and went on a self-imposed exile. Socrates was not given an apple but a glass of hemlock after being found guilty by the establishment for corrupting the minds of the youth. Sometimes the exceptionally good teachers are not appreciated. Best strategy is to stay true to your values but live to fight another day. Follow your passion and what you believe in. Should the accolades come, just be thankful and carry on.

■ CM

## Kind Intentioned Advice Misplaced

by Dr Angela Tan Quill, Family Physician in Home Care Practice

"Primum non nocere", aka, "first, do no harm".

It is an ethos that we doctors abide by. However, there could be cases that our kind-intentioned advice end up causing distress to patients. My recent breastfeeding journey (as a new mother) has allowed me to witness how some mothers became so distraught, after receiving inaccurate advice given by their doctors and started labeling these clinics as non-breastfeeding friendly.

Life for any new parent, is daunting. Evidence-based support is what will probably lead parents through this challenging period. Failure to breastfeed for



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mothers who intend to, causes an increase in the risk of post-partum depression<sup>1</sup>. Successful breastfeeding mothers have noted to have a decrease in the risk of post-partum depression<sup>2</sup>. Hence, to better enable ourselves to provide accurate care for breastfeeding families, we as a professional body need to be mindful of the 3 common misconceptions below:

### 1. "Pump and Dump"

As healthcare professionals, we often err on the side of caution. Hence, we are concerned of the effects of the medications prescribed causing harm

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