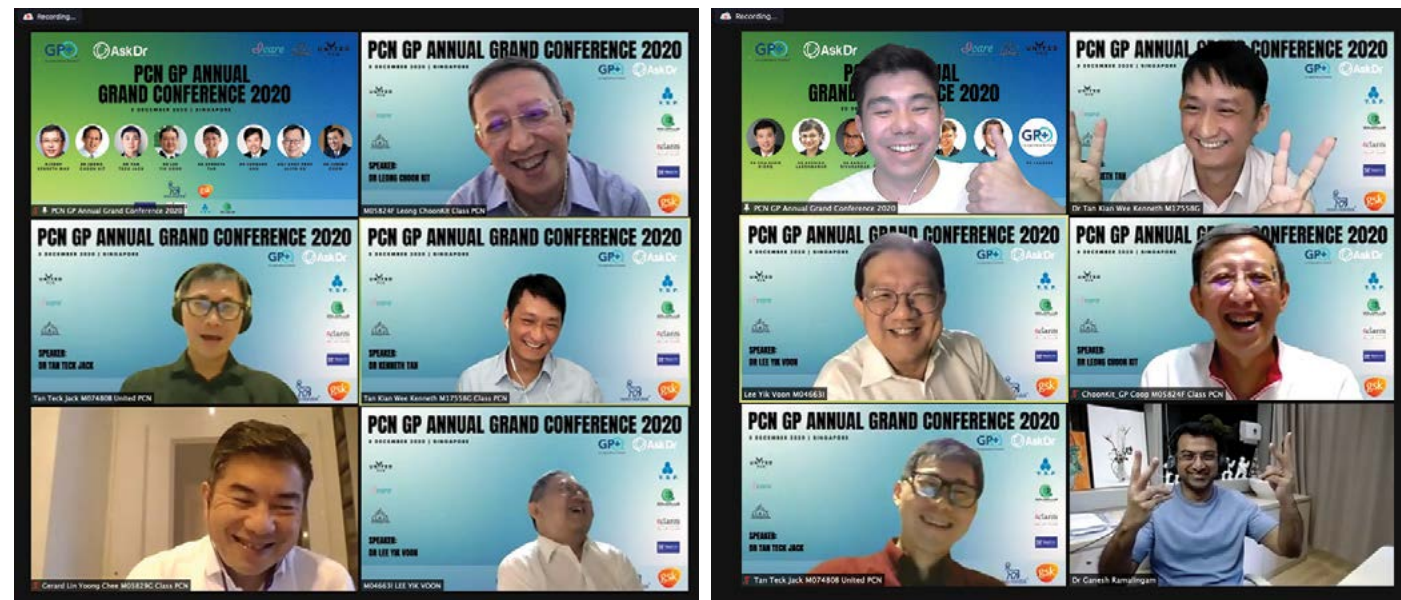


PCN GP Annual Grand Conference 2020 and Primary Care Grand Conference 2021: Collaboration and Innovation as a Community

by the Organising Chairperson of PCN GP Annual Grand Conference 2020 (Dr. Kenneth Tan) and Organising Chairperson of Primary Care Grand Conference 2021 (Dr. Dinesh VG)



Last year, one of the key events in my calendar was the PCN GP Annual Grand Conference 2020. This inaugural conference was organized for GPs by GPs and held online over 3 weekends in December 2020. Over 30 speakers spoke on a range of topics relating to primary care and this was well attended by Primary Care Network (PCN) GPs.

The idea to organize a conference for GPs by GPs came about from informal discussions between the PCN leaders from Class, i-CARE and United PCN. During the pandemic, GPs received many kind invitations to attend talks and webinars organized by our specialist colleagues. However, there was no conference with a focus on primary care, organized by GPs that covered comprehensively the conditions we manage on a daily basis.

The PCN leaders agreed that GP+ Co-operative would organize the conference, and I was supported by the GP+ Co-operative committee and members in coordinating it. GP+ Co-operative also engaged the health education platform AskDr to help with the event.

Given the rapid changes in the healthcare landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a reduction in clinic capacity due to safe-distancing measures, there was a pressing need for doctors to do more with every patient interaction and optimize patient care.

The vision was to create a conference platform for cross-sharing of best practices for patient care. Primary

care practitioners and specialists could come together to provide comprehensive, coordinated and team-based care for their patients. For greater relevance to existing ecosystem priorities, conference topics were aligned to conditions listed under the Chronic Disease Management Program (CDMP).

As PCN members were mainly private GP clinics, we sought expert speakers in the private sector that had an interest in closer collaboration with GPs. Many of these specialists are also members of GP+ co-operative or interested in joining GP+ co-operative. We also invited expert speakers from the public sector to share about their initiatives involving collaborations with primary care.

The highlights of this conference were listening to our experts share about how GPs play a key role in the early diagnosis and management of disease, and how we can link our patients with the community resources, allied health professionals, GPs with special interests, and specialist colleagues to improve quality of care.

Within the disease-specific ecosystem, close communication between GPs and specialists can enable co-management of patients, and referrals that go both ways. Improved access to specialized investigations and point of care testing at the GP clinic helps GPs manage patients more effectively and coordinate the patient's journey.

Continuing the conference series, the Primary Care Grand

Conference 2021 was held on 24th July which focused on Innovations in Primary Care. Speakers presented the latest developments in digital health, pharmacogenomics and novel therapeutics relevant to primary care. This opened many new conversations and potential collaborations between primary care practitioners and the providers of these innovative solutions, for the betterment of patient care during COVID-19 and beyond.

One of the challenges we faced was improving engagement among participants and bridging the distance of the virtual format. Aside from keeping updated on latest developments, attending CME events often provides treasured opportunities to catch up with old friends and interact with new colleagues to form collaborations for patient care.

We sought to create a virtual experience that provided attendees with similar opportunities by developing new modules with AskDr to facilitate forum-style interactions between the attendees and speakers in the lead up to the

event as well as during the event. These were organised in virtual micro-forums along with an asynchronous poster presentation portal for health innovations submitted from researchers and start-ups participating in this conference.

These innovations served to catalogue discussions and extend the long-tail impact of CME sessions through continued access, opportunities for interactions, and partnerships post-events.

As the pandemic rages on, many of us in primary care have started to see patients present as a result of the impact of prolonged social restrictions on mental health and wellness, with the latter extending to individual fitness

given the closure of gyms and other facilities, women's health as well as men's health. In the next iteration of the conference, GP+ co-operative plans to curate topics that will address these challenges, for sharing of best practices in primary care to address them. We hope this will be in the interest of our fellow colleagues and we look forward to your continued support!

■ CM

Difficulties and Ethical Issues during COVID-19 Pandemic: A FP's View

by Dr Ng Chee Lian Lawrence, FCFP(S), Editorial Team Member (Team A)

Aim: To stimulate readers to think about ethical aspects of care, especially during the early days of the pandemic in 2020. Articles such as this do not make conclusions for the reader. It can only point the direction and it is up to the student or reader to think through the issues and the reasoning. He can then make his own decisions and form his own views. Secondly, it is a starting point for research ideas in Singapore about our experiences, solutions and public health policies related to COVID-19 and future pandemics.

Abbreviations

HCWs: healthcare workers
GPs: general practitioners
PPE: personal protective equipment
Swab: refers to swab for diagnostic testing of COVID
PHPC: Public health preparedness clinics

In Singapore, as GPs, we are located in housing estates, polyclinics or shopping centres. Unlike hospitals, we are much closer to the ground. We don't have layers of bureaucracy to shield us from the unhappiness of the public on the ground. It can be stressful when unhappy things happen unexpectedly in the clinic. (1)

As in the movie Wizard of Oz (1939), during the past 18 months, we have been caught up in a whirlwind with many things changing every day. Even while we cannot travel anywhere, the cheese has moved and carpets pulled from

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