

SINGAPORE HEALTH  
**INSPIRATIONAL  
PATIENT &  
CAREGIVER**  
AWARD 2015



# ABOUT THE AWARD

04

## INSPIRATIONAL PATIENTS

**Home Nursing Foundation**  
Mr Seah See Seng 06

**KK Women's and Children's Hospital**  
Ms Lan Linghai 07  
Ms Nur Fatimah Binti Sabah 08  
Mr Tan Kai Ern 09

**National Cancer Centre Singapore**  
Mr Lim Khoon Huat 10  
Mr Ow Weng Keong 11  
Mr Samuel Seong Koon 12

**National Dental Centre Singapore**  
Mr Stephen Chan 13

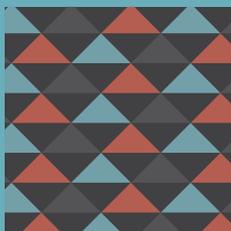
**National Heart Centre Singapore**  
Mr Mohd Ali Bin Hashim 14  
Mr Tan Qing Sheng Daniel 15

**National Neuroscience Institute**  
Mr Edwin Lim 16  
Ms Teo Wei Shan 17

**Ren Ci Nursing Home**  
Mr Marzuki Bin Repu 18

**Singapore Eye Research Institute**  
Mr Deans Gordon Paul 19

**Singapore General Hospital**  
Mr Alex Wong 20  
Ms Helina Chan 21  
Ms Jocelyn Suarez 22  
Mr Lee Yong Jie 23  
Mr Leong Teng Chow 24  
Ms Melissa Lim 25  
Mr Mustafa Kamal Bin Abu Bakar 26  
Mdm Nancy Chua 27  
Mr Poh Khoon Yong 28



# INSPIRATIONAL CAREGIVERS

**Bright Vision Hospital**  
Mr Michael Koh 30

**Home Nursing Foundation**  
Mrs Kaliyana Sundaresan 31

**KK Women's and Children's Hospital**  
Mdm Keh Li Ching 32  
Mr Low Swee Chai 33

**National Cancer Centre Singapore**  
Mdm Tan Swee Eng 34

**National Heart Centre Singapore**  
Ms Choy Wenhui 35

**Ren Ci Hospital**  
Mr Woo Sen Chuan 36

**Singapore General Hospital**  
Mdm Chua Soh Chen 37

**Singapore National Eye Centre**  
Mr Benson Sim 38

**PAST WINNERS** 39



# ABOUT THE **AWARD**

The Singapore Health Inspirational Patient and Caregiver Award is an annual award which honours individuals for their strength, courage and resilience in the face of healthcare challenges. Into its sixth year, the winners continue to inspire us with their ability to overcome adversity and provide valuable learning for many, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other healthcare workers who have nominated them.

This year, we are recognising 32 winners who have motivated healthcare professionals to deliver better care to their patients and inspired the people around them with their zest for life.



# OUR INSPIRATIONAL PATIENTS

Mr Seah See Seng

Ms Lan Linghai

Ms Nur Fatimah Binti Sabah

Mr Tan Kai Ern

Mr Lim Khoon Huat

Mr Ow Weng Keong

Mr Samuel Seong Koon

Mr Stephen Chan

Mr Mohd Ali Bin Hashim

Mr Tan Qing Sheng Daniel

Mr Edwin Lim

Ms Teo Wei Shan

Mr Marzuki Bin Repu

Mr Deans Gordon Paul

Mr Alex Wong

Ms Helina Chan

Ms Jocelyn Suarez

Mr Lee Yong Jie

Mr Leong Teng Chow

Ms Melissa Lim

Mr Mustafa Kamal Bin Abu Bakar

Mdm Nancy Chua

Mr Poh Khoon Yong



# A MODEL OF INDEPENDENCE

MR SEAH SEE SENG

*I admire Mr Seah for his independence, his zeal for life and his ability to transform a dire situation into a positive one.*

**Hariati Bte Sahak**  
who nominated Mr Seah See Seng for the award

Mr Seah See Seng (left) and Hariati Bte Sahak.



Mr Seah See Seng's extraordinary show of independence is inspiring considering that he is disabled and gets around in a wheelchair.

In 1992, when he was 39 years old and working as a Machine Engineering transporter, he was involved in a workplace accident when a one-tonne machine fell on his back, leaving him paralysed from the waist down.

During his stay at the hospital, See Seng became very reliant on the nurses to help manage his daily needs, from going to the washroom to getting on and off the bed. Being handicapped, he felt he had lost all form of independence. But his perspective changed when his doctor told him, "Mr Seah, you've got to learn how to do things by yourself. Once you are discharged, there will be no one to look after you 24/7 anymore."

"I realised that my doctor was right. Once I'm home, there will be no one to help me out, I cannot rely on anyone, so I had to learn to be independent," he said. See Seng soon learnt how to get dressed on his own and move around by observing how other wheelchair-bound patients moved.

Despite his paralysis, See Seng refuses to allow obstacles to stand in his way. For example, simple tasks such as switching on the lights and closing the windows can be a challenge but he overcomes them with clever measures, such as using poles of different lengths to reach for the light switches and to open and close the windows while in bed.

See Seng also provides for himself by selling tissue paper at Sembawang MRT station. "Many commuters at Sembawang are my regular customers; I greet every one of them. The kids love chatting with me because I'm friendly," he said.

In addition, See Seng sets aside time to give back to society by repairing broken wheelchairs and donating them to needy elderly in his community.

Hariati Bte Sahak, Acting Nurse Clinician at Home Nursing Foundation, who nominated See Seng for the award, said, "I admire Mr Seah for his independence, his zeal for life and his ability to transform a dire situation into a positive one."

# GIRL WITH A BIG HEART

MS LAN LINGHAI

Unlike most youth, 17-year-old Lan Linghai did not have the chance to enjoy life as a normal teenager. Struck with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, or lupus, when she was just 14 years old, Linghai went through what was literally the most painful period of her life as she developed ulcers and body aches that just would not go away. She stopped attending school and stayed in bed all day because she was constantly tired and in so much pain.

Linghai's condition deteriorated so much that at one point she had to be hospitalised. That was when she learned her ulcers had spread to her intestines and she had to have an operation. Following the operation, it took Linghai six long months to recover in hospital.

It was a trying period and Linghai cried constantly, frustrated at the situation she was in. It was words of encouragement from her mother that changed her attitude. "My mum is a Christian and she told me God has a purpose for me getting this disease," Linghai said. "Maybe the purpose is to help doctors and also to help

other patients. My mum told me that I must be willing to share my experience with others so that I can be a source of encouragement for those who are in the same situation as me. The idea that I might be an inspiration to others really motivated me."

So Linghai joined the KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) rheumatology support group in June 2014. Now she regularly meets with other young patients to share her story about her fight against lupus.

"Linghai inspires me with her quiet resolve and how she takes things in stride. Life has been full of bumps for her, but she presses on with so much resilience. Linghai has a very big heart," said Neo Liwen, former Senior Medical Social Worker, Department of Medical Social Work at KKH, who nominated Linghai for the award.

Linghai also volunteers at Club Rainbow twice a week where she helps with the children's activities. "I know what it feels like to be lonely and helpless and hope to encourage and comfort the children at Club Rainbow. I'm happy that I can make a difference to the children," she said.



*Life has been full of bumps for Linghai, but she presses on with so much resilience.*

**Neo Liwen**  
who nominated Ms Lan Linghai for the award

# PRESSING ON WITH A POSITIVE SPIRIT

## MS NUR FATIHAH BINTI SABAH

Ms Nur Fatihah Binti Sabah faced various challenges when she was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus in 2013 at the age of 17. Lupus is an autoimmune disease where the body's immune system becomes hyperactive and attacks normal, healthy tissue. While coping with the discomfort and pain that comes with lupus, Nur Fatihah was dealt with another blow when her kidneys failed in 2014. Having to deal with her worsening condition was stressful. It didn't help that she had to also deal with some of her friends' insensitive remarks about her condition.

One of the side effects of having kidney lupus was that her legs swelled up. "When my friends saw my swollen leg, they said, 'Ew, you look like you have elephant's foot,'" Nur Fatihah said. "It really affected my self confidence. But I decided to stand up for myself even when others laughed at my swollen limbs."

Another challenge she faced was the sheer number of pills she had to take — 20 pills to be taken over eight times daily. "Every time I took my medication, I would feel like vomiting. I would lose my appetite too," she said. Nur Fatihah soon overcame this issue when she found a YouTube video which provided tips on how to take medication.

Neo Liwen, former Senior Medical Social Worker, Department of Medical Social Work at KKH, who nominated Nur Fatihah for the award, said, "It is very challenging for a young adult like Nur Fatihah to have to adjust her life around a strict medical regime when her peers can focus on pursuing dreams and life goals with the ease of good health. I am inspired by her positive spirit."

Nur Fatihah joined the KKH rheumatology support group for teens in June 2014 to share her experience with other patients. "Nur Fatihah is keen to inspire others despite her condition. I am hopeful that she can be a youth mentor to newly diagnosed patients in the near future," Liwen said.

*It is very challenging for a young adult like Nur Fatihah to have to adjust her life around a strict medical regime when her peers can focus on pursuing dreams and life goals with the ease of good health. I am inspired by her positive spirit.*

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**Neo Liwen**  
who nominated Ms Nur Fatihah Binti Sabah  
for the award

# OVERCOMING LIMITS

MR TAN KAI ERN

*Kai Ern is always looking for ways to improve his situation and doesn't let his illness stop him from working towards his goals.*

**Assoc Prof Chan Mei Yoke**  
who nominated Mr Tan Kai Ern for the award



Mr Tan Kai Ern (right) and his mother.

15-year-old Tan Kai Ern was diagnosed with severe Haemophilia A when he was an infant. Living with this bleeding disorder that slows the blood clotting process meant that Kai Ern often experienced prolonged bleeding following any injury. With each fall, he would sustain bruises and risk internal bleeding. To manage the condition, Kai Ern needed injections of medication every three days.

Assoc Prof Chan Mei Yoke, Head and Senior Consultant of the Department of Haematology/Oncology, KK Women's and Children's Hospital, who has been seeing Kai Ern for the last 15 years, suggested that he participate in the "PROTECT" study, which allows him the opportunity to try a new medication that will significantly reduce the number of injections needed. Kai Ern has been participating in the study for two years.

"When we first launched the study, Kai Ern was very supportive and was the first patient to volunteer," Prof Chan said. She praised Kai Ern for being a model patient,

noting that he is compliant with research protocol and conscientiously keeps records of bleeds. He is also reliable in keeping his appointments and tracking the use of his study drug.

Kai Ern isn't afraid of complications arising from the new drug and puts his full trust in Prof Chan. Always positive, Kai Ern takes the view that life goes on despite his condition. "It is inevitable to get some knocks and bruises, but I don't think about it much. I just need to get the injection quickly," he said. Much as he loves sports, the condition does not allow Kai Ern, a student at St Hilda's Secondary School to take up contact sports. Instead, he channels his interest to robotics and swimming which he enjoys.

"Despite the limitations caused by his illness, Kai Ern remains positive and cheerful and leads a full and active life. He is always looking for ways to improve his situation and doesn't let his illness stop him from working towards his goals," added Prof Chan.

# SMILING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

MR LIM KHOON HUAT

*What's the point of being sad? Whether I'm sad or happy, life still goes on so I choose to be happy.*

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In 2011, Mr Lim Khoon Huat was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer. The severity of his lung condition led to an increase in saliva production, so much so that every day, he would fill up to six to seven bottles with saliva. Before bedtime, he would place two towels next to him and both would be soaked with fluid due to the need to constantly spit saliva.

Khoon Huat was receiving chemotherapy when Dr Daniel Tan, Consultant, Division of Medical Oncology, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) suggested that he try a new medication instead. Recalling the doctor's look of surprise when Khoon Huat looked happy and relieved about this change in treatment, he said, "What's the point of being sad? Whether I'm sad or happy, life still goes on so I choose to be happy."

Khoon Huat tried the new medication for five days. On the fifth night, he noticed that his two towels were dry and

he did not cough throughout the night. He also no longer required the use of an oxygen tank to breathe.

The cheerful bachelor is a well-loved figure at NCCS. "Whenever I visit the hospital, I'll always crack a joke or two to make the staff laugh and I seemed to be only one who is smiling while most other patients look grim. To me, being sad is pointless," Khoon Huat said. "There's no point being grouchy or grumpy — you have to smile. I believe if your mood and state of mind is negative, it will worsen the illness."

In November 2013, Khoon Huat received the good news that his cancer has gone into remission. His doctor encouraged him to share his experience with other cancer patients, to which he readily agreed. Khoon Huat has since spoken at various events organised by NCCS where he advised others "not to be afraid because there is no way to avoid the illness once you are diagnosed. Just accept the illness and face up to reality."

# LEARNING TO ENJOY THE PRESENT

## MR OW WENG KEONG

In 2009, Mr Ow Weng Keong, then 50, was diagnosed with liver cancer. Although he underwent a successful operation, the cancer recurred and spread in 2013. However, Weng Keong was determined not to let the illness take over his life.

In December that year, he took part in a Phase 1 clinical trial led by Dr Choo Su Pin, Senior Consultant, Division of Medical Oncology, National Cancer Centre Singapore. At the beginning, Weng Keong experienced side effects from the medication — his hair started to drop and his body felt warmer than usual so he had to take regular showers to cool down. Blisters also formed on the soles of his feet, making it painful to walk.

Despite the discomfort, Weng Keong bravely continued with the clinical trial and eventually responded to the therapy. "I managed to push on with the encouragement from people around me. It meant a lot to me to be able to take part in this trial as I wanted to help other patients with the same condition," said Weng Keong. More than one year on, he is still on the experimental therapy and his cancer is under control.

Dr Choo praised Weng Keong for being a model clinical trial participant. "He is a model of positivity and resilience.

*It is normal to have mood swings when you are plagued with illness. Recognise this and engage in positive thoughts and activities to boost your mood.*

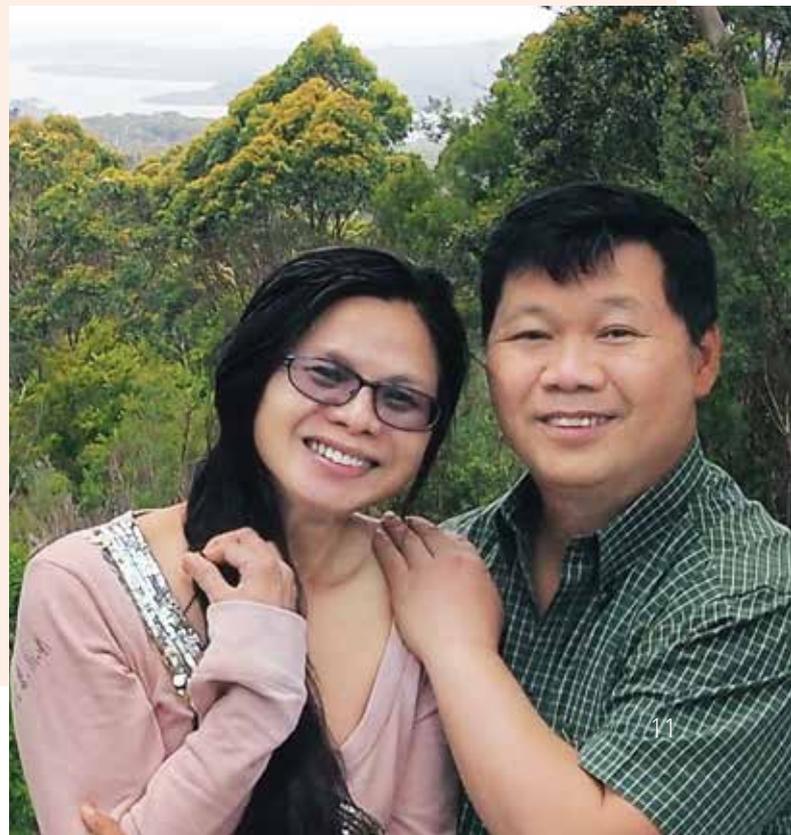
Mr Ow Weng Keong (right) and his wife.

He even shared his experiences with other patients who were worried about cancer treatment and taking part in clinical trials," said Dr Choo, who nominated Weng Keong for the award.

As a cancer survivor, Weng Keong believes in taking things easy now. "I try my best to be less of a perfectionist. I do not get upset when things don't turn out as expected. I have also learnt to cherish the time I have with my family."

Weng Keong also offered this advice for fellow cancer patients: "One should try to accept the diagnosis as soon as possible, and do what you can to get well. It is normal to have mood swings when you are plagued with illness. Recognise this and engage in positive thoughts and activities to boost your mood."

His support for cancer research was so strong that Weng Keong even participated in the recent Run for Hope event to raise funds for cancer research. "Weng Keong volunteered to participate in the pre-run with the doctors to raise awareness about Run For Hope and I was really impressed that he completed the entire 3.5 km despite fatigue and discomfort from his illness," said Dr Choo.



# FINDING LIGHT IN DARKNESS



*Life is defined by what you do when you're alive, so I decided to do something good for society.*

## MR SAMUEL SEONG KOON

When Mr Samuel Seong Koon was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer in November 2013, he became depressed and started preparing for death. One day, he went out for a walk and noticed dark clouds above. A thought came to mind — “Without light, there’s no beauty.” A verse from the bible further enlightened him.

“That verse changed me,” Samuel recalled. “That verse told me that cancer is darkness, put it away. Every time I think I’m going to die or the pain is too much, I would say ‘Lord, let me focus on your light.’ I decided to do something good with my life, to bring light to the world.”

He then went for two major operations to remove his colon and malignant tumours in the liver. According to his doctor, Assoc Prof Koo Wen Hsin, Senior Consultant, Division of Medical Oncology at the National Cancer Centre Singapore, the chemotherapy and surgery weakened Samuel — who used to run 5km a day — significantly.

“Despite this, he felt that he could use this experience to motivate others. It was not to gain sympathy, but to

encourage others to be strong. While he was still receiving chemotherapy, he even took part in the Red Cross Charity Concert to raise funds for the sick and needy. He never missed rehearsals, and put up an impeccable performance at the concert,” recalled Prof Koo.

A businessman and professional musician, Samuel performs and shares about his cancer journey at churches. On Saturdays, Samuel teaches Bangladeshi workers English. On Sundays, he helps out at Lakeside Family Services, where he chats with people who have been displaced from their homes. Samuel also gives talks, performs magic shows and sings for patients from the motor neuron disease support group at the National Neuroscience Institute.

“I came to realise that it’s not scary to die because all of us must, someday. Life is defined by what you do when you’re alive, so I decided to do something good for society,” said Samuel, whose cancer is now in remission. Prof Koo, who nominated Samuel for the award, said, “I admire Samuel for his positive attitude and willingness to help others despite his own challenges. He gives talks where he encourages patients not to give up and I can see his sharing touches people deeply.”

# CHAMPION FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

MR STEPHEN CHAN

When Assoc Prof Christina Sim, Senior Consultant from the Prosthodontic Unit, Department of Restorative Dentistry, National Dental Centre Singapore (NDCS) first put out a call for volunteers for her clinical research study to determine the oral effects from the radiation treatment of Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma (NPC), she had difficulty finding patients to take part. This was because patients at pre-radiotherapy stage are usually in great distress after they have been diagnosed with cancer and are not in a frame of mind to appreciate the importance of good oral health — let alone participate in a dental research study.

Prof Sim was grateful when Mr Stephen Chan agreed to participate without hesitation.

Stephen was diagnosed with NPC, a type of head and neck cancer in 2010. He underwent 33 radiotherapy sessions which ended in September that year. While still receiving treatment, he also participated in two other clinical trials conducted by the National Cancer Centre Singapore.

“I’ll take part in any research study, so that even if I die, at least I would have helped somebody,” Stephen said, explaining why he was so willing to participate in medical research. Although radiotherapy caused his mouth and throat to develop sores which made swallowing difficult, as well as blisters to form on his neck and shoulders,

he managed to cast aside the discomfort and diligently carry out the dental care practices recommended by Prof Sim.

Stephen shared that in helping others by contributing to research studies, he has also received great blessings in return. “The pilot study by NDCS was a blessing to me as I learned useful caries preventive measures and retained my ability to open my mouth fully by performing regular jaw exercises. Stiff jaws and tooth decay are some of the side effects of radiotherapy,” he said.

Prof Sim, who nominated Stephen for this award, praised him for his dedication. “Mr Chan never missed a single research session, even those that were scheduled during the period when he was undergoing radiotherapy and chemotherapy.”

Even when the cancer recurred and he was due to undergo surgery, Stephen still found time to do media interviews to highlight the importance of oral health for head and neck cancer patients as well as participate in a patient education video on head-and-neck radiotherapy and its dental implications. “I wanted to spread the message to other cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy that good oral health and jaw exercises should be maintained after cancer treatment to preserve oral-related quality of life,” he said.

*I’ll take part in any research study, so that even if I die, at least I would have helped somebody.*

Mr Stephen Chan (right) and Assoc Prof Christina Sim.



# FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

## MR MOHD ALI BIN HASHIM

A heart patient with National Heart Centre Singapore (NHCS) for the last two years, Mr Mohd Ali Bin Hashim was admitted to NHCS in 2014 for sternal wound infection, a major cause of morbidity and mortality in patients undergoing cardiac surgery. He eventually recovered after undergoing a coronary artery bypass grafting. However, the recovery period was a long drawn one where he was constantly in pain. It was sheer willpower that got him through this difficult period. "I told myself, even if I'm in pain, I must go through it," he said.

Mohd Ali's optimism and cheerful personality was a source of inspiration for patients and nurses alike. He was always able to look at the bright side of things and he strove to make the best out of every situation. For instance, despite a drastic loss of weight from 89kg to 74kg over a period of two months, Mohd Ali did not fret over it. Instead, he viewed it in a positive light, happy that he was able to fit in the pants that were once too tight for him. The family of Mohd Ali proved to be a vital source of support, visiting him every day at the hospital.

While in hospital, Mohd Ali would give advice to other patients about how to manage pain. "It's in the mind — don't be so serious, laugh more and you'll feel better," he would tell them. Whenever he was in pain, he would try to manage it on his own, only calling the nurses if the pain persisted. "I don't like to trouble the nurses," he said. "If I can take the pain, then I'll take it."

Staff Nurse Mohd Saddam Bin Tampil who was taking care of Mohd Ali at Ward 56, NHCS, said he became so close to Mohd Ali during his stay that the latter was like a father to him.

According to Mohd Saddam, Mohd Ali was always quick to speak for the nurses when other patients passed negative remarks, by telling them that the staff was working in a "stressful environment". "This really boosted our morale," Mohd Saddam said. "He also showered the nurses with thanks and kind words. Mr Mohd Ali shared his experience with other patients undergoing the same operation as well, and he always encouraged them to adhere to the advice given by the medical team."

*He was like a father to me.  
He's truly my best patient.*

**Mohd Saddam Bin Tampil**  
who nominated Mr Mohd Ali Bin Hashim  
for the award

Mohd Ali Bin Hashim (left) and  
Mohd Saddam Bin Tampil.



# A COURAGEOUS HEART

MR TAN QING SHENG DANIEL

*Despite his illness, Daniel was determined to enter university and he studied until the wee hours of the night to catch up with his school work. His hard work paid off.*

**Betty Yap**  
who nominated Mr Tan Qing Sheng Daniel  
for the award

For Mr and Mrs Tan, the sense of euphoria knowing they were expecting their first child was soon marred when they learned that Daniel had a congenital heart defect and that doctors predicted he wouldn't live more than three months. It was devastating news for the parents but Daniel not only beat the odds to live beyond the three-month mark, he now leads a relatively normal life and is doing well academically as a first-year student at Nanyang Technological University.

Recalling the challenges he faced as he was growing up, Daniel shared that the diagnosis of a heart block when he was 16 was the hardest hurdle he had to overcome. Given the severity of his condition, a pacemaker, a credit-card sized device that is implanted just under the skin in the chest, was required to keep his heart beating normally. Daniel struggled to get used to the pacemaker as his heart would either beat too fast or too slow. He had multiple admissions to the hospital for six months and couldn't attend school during that period because he was often breathless and very tired. "There was a point when I couldn't do anything, I couldn't even get out of bed to go to the toilet," Daniel recalled. "During those difficult times, it was my Christian faith that gave me the strength to carry on. My family, friends and teachers also came alongside me and encouraged me not to give up."



Mr Tan Qing Sheng Daniel (left) and Betty Yap.

Nurse Clinician Betty Yap from the Nursing Specialty Care Unit, National Heart Centre Singapore, who nominated Daniel for the award, commended him on his positive attitude. "Daniel has shown tremendous strength and courage while battling the stress of living with this chronic condition. Over the years, he has made friends with the nursing staff and doctors. His bright outlook and 'never give up' attitude has touched many people around him, including fellow patients."

Despite his illness, Daniel was determined to enter university and he studied until the wee hours of the night to catch up with his school work. His hard work paid off and even his teachers at School of the Arts were amazed at the excellent results he achieved despite missing more than nine months of school. Daniel is happy that he has achieved his dream of going to university and is living in the school hostel where he can be independent. "Daniel's perseverance and determination has inspired his peers to live life to the fullest," Betty said.

# WRITING TO INSPIRE OTHERS

MR EDWIN LIM



At age 48 four years ago, Mr Edwin Lim was a high-flyer who had everything going for him — a successful career in the banking industry that spanned over 20 years and a loving family with two children. It came as a massive blow when his doctor broke the news — that he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Within 18 months, Edwin lost the use of his limbs and vocal cords.

“It was a challenge, having to overcome both the mental and physical hurdles but I knew that my journey would not be a solo trip,” he said, “Sure, it’s easy to say that keeping a positive attitude or never losing hope is important, however I’ve found that whenever I hit a bad patch, be it a physical limitation or an emotional setback, it was critical to never keep it festering within me. Being able to share my difficulties with a caregiver or loved ones made it much easier to overcome the circumstances as they are my beacon of courage, strength, and hope.”

In spite of his illness, Edwin managed to write and publish two books, *The Ultimate Banker* (2012) and *Personal Investing* (2014), both of which give insights into the complexities of the financial industry. By authoring

*Having the opportunity to share my personal experience in person is extremely meaningful because when patients can see my physical condition, paralysed from neck down and unable to speak, they understand that there is still so much to live for and wonderful memories still to be shared with loved ones.*

these books, Edwin hopes to not only help aspiring bankers understand what it takes to make it in the highly competitive financial industry but assist others to achieve their career goals. Sharing his wealth of experience was his way of giving back to society. “I was pleasantly surprised and motivated to be told that my determination and what I’m trying to accomplish was inspiring to fellow patients, especially when they understood the extent of my physical limitation.”

Edwin is also an active member of the ALS support group at the National Neuroscience Institute (NNI). “Having the opportunity to share my personal experiences in person is extremely meaningful because when patients can see my physical condition, paralysed from neck down and unable to speak, they understand that there is still so much to live for and wonderful memories still to be shared with loved ones.”

Dr Ang Kexin, Associate Consultant at the Department of Neurology, NNI, who nominated Edwin for the award said, “Edwin has incredible perseverance and mettle, and is an often quoted example of someone who has controlled his disease, rather than let the disease control him.”

# WHEN HARD WORK PAYS OFF

MS TEO WEI SHAN

In July 2012, Teo Wei Shan was involved in a serious road accident while riding pillion on a motorcycle. Then 22, she suffered a severe head injury and was unable to recognise any of her family members and friends when she woke up in the hospital after 15 weeks in coma.

It was a long road to recovery. Wei Shan was hospitalised for half a year, and continued her rehabilitation at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) rehabilitation centre. It was an intense period where she had to work hard to regain her physical strength and memory. However, she faced setbacks several times when she had to be re-admitted to the hospital when complications arose due to her head injury. Tan Bee Ling, Senior Staff Nurse at the Neurosurgery Department of National Neuroscience Institute (TTSH Campus), who nominated Wei Shan for the award said, "Wei Shan's resilience shone through despite her recurrent admissions and having to undergo two major neurosurgical operations."

Recalling the initial period when she was unable to communicate, had to be fed through a tube and required help with all her daily needs, Wei Shan is amazed at how much she has been through. With strong support and encouragement from her mother, she was able to accept her condition and work hard on various home-based therapies to get her life back on track.

Wei Shan said, "Although I couldn't walk properly, I didn't stop trying. I wanted to prove others wrong by walking on my own again."

And walk on her own she did. Through sheer hard work and a never-give-up attitude, Wei Shan regained her ability to walk and speak, and managed to wean off tube feeding. "Wei Shan's ability to bounce back and function normally really amazed me. I admire the courage and persistence she showed on the long road to recovery," said Bee Ling.

Wei Shan was a pet groomer before she met with the accident, but her condition prevents her from being able to perform that physically-demanding role again. Determined not to depend on her mother for living expenses, she found a job as a part-time cashier in 2014. "Slip-ups at work were blamed on me because of my short-term memory. So when I switched jobs, I worked extra hard to memorise customer service processes so I can perform my job well."

When asked what words of advice she has for other patients, Wei Shan said, "Never give up no matter how tough life gets."

*Never give up no matter how tough life gets.*

Ms Teo Wei Shan (right) and Tan Bee Ling.



# RECOVERING THROUGH STRONG MOTIVATION

MR MARZUKI BIN REPU

*I find Mr Marzuki's determination to get well, his resilience and cheerfulness, despite the many difficulties faced, truly remarkable. It encourages me to face my challenges in as calm and positive a manner as he does.*

**Alice Choo**  
who nominated Mr Marzuki Bin Repu for the award

Mr Marzuki Bin Repu (right) and Alice Choo.



When a severe infection left Mr Marzuki Bin Repu with no choice but to have his left leg amputated above the knee, he told himself, "You must try to get better; even if you only have one leg, you have to be strong," he said.

After surgery, Mr Marzuki was admitted to Ren Ci Nursing Home in 2013 for long-term care but he quickly set himself a goal of regaining independence so that he could return home.

Ms Alice Choo, Senior Medical Social Worker at Ren Ci Nursing Home, who nominated Mr Marzuki for the award, said she was impressed by how motivated Mr Marzuki was in working on his recovery. "Hiccups in the recovery process did not deter him at all. Mr Marzuki was very eager to overcome them so that he could go home," she said. For instance, although his prosthetic leg did not fit well despite multiple fittings, he patiently kept his appointments until a perfect fit was found.

He also insisted on doing his own wheelchair transfer without help from the nurses. Alice recalled Mr Marzuki

telling her, "I must practise doing my own wheelchair transfer. I cannot ask the nurse to help me, because there will be no one to help me at home."

Mr Marzuki's success in regaining independence also inspired fellow nursing home residents. Through Mr Marzuki's encouragement and seeing how he managed to overcome his challenges, one resident in particular has since gained more confidence to work on going home too.

Since his discharge in August 2014, Mr Marzuki has been working at the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD), where he packs goodie bags from Monday to Friday. He also takes part in exercise programmes at SPD twice a week.

Alice, who still keeps in touch with Mr Marzuki, shared that he truly is a model of perseverance. "I find his determination to get well, his resilience and cheerfulness, despite the many difficulties faced, truly remarkable. It encourages me to face my challenges in as calm and positive a manner as he does," said Alice.

# GOODWILL BEGETS GOODWILL

## MR DEANS GORDON PAUL

Mr Deans Gordon Paul, 83, suffers from glaucoma and had to apply anti-glaucoma eye drops regularly to lower his intra-ocular pressure. A patient with the Singapore National Eye Centre for the last 22 years, Mr Paul is thankful for the excellent care given by the healthcare team. Hence when asked to participate in a research study at the Singapore Eye Research Institute (SERI), he readily agreed. The study looks into a new method of delivering the anti-glaucoma medication with an injection to the eye that provides a steady release of the drug over several months.

Peck Chye Fong, Deputy Director of the SERI Clinic, who nominated Mr Paul for the award, praised him for being a model patient who put his full trust in the research team. She notes that he is always cheerful and greets everyone — even other patients — warmly when he is at the SERI Clinic.

What also sets Mr Paul apart is his patience and accommodating nature, especially when the research project could have caused him some frustration. For example, he didn't protest when he had to do the same visual field assessment three times during the course of his participation. On some visits, he was required to stay in the clinic from 8am to 5pm to monitor his intra-ocular pressure. There was never a word of complaint and instead Mr Paul would thank the team for the care given to him.

On being described as a "model patient", Mr Paul explained that he is willing to do what the doctors ask of him because he sees them as experts. "I don't argue with doctors because they know best. I trust them completely because I believe I am in very good hands."

"Ultimately, it cuts both ways, the medical staff inspire me with their professionalism. I go to the hospital and have a positive experience, in turn I hope to also inspire fellow patients through whatever means I can," shares Mr Paul.

*Ultimately, it cuts both ways, the medical staff inspire me with their professionalism. I go to the hospital and have a positive experience, in turn I hope to also inspire fellow patients through whatever means I can.*

Mr Deans Gordon Paul (right) and Peck Chye Fong.



# BEACON OF HOPE

MR ALEX WONG

When Mr Alex Wong was diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD) in 2011, fear and loneliness overwhelmed him. He was in so much pain that he couldn't sleep at night, and when friends tried to comfort him by telling him — "I understand your pain", he would brush them off, feeling that there was no way they could understand what he was going through.

"If I'd known of someone who had experienced what I did, that would have made a big difference to me when I was in hospital," said Alex. When Alex recovered from his ordeal, he became an active volunteer, making regular trips to the hospital to share his experience with fellow IBD patients. "I'm happy to visit patients because I don't want them to feel they are in this alone," he said.

One such patient who benefitted from Alex's sharing is a 21-year-old patient who felt extremely anxious and

lost when he was hospitalised with the condition. Alex's frequent visits and steady reassurance that the chronic disease is controllable brought a lot of comfort to him. He felt uplifted each time Alex visited him. They have kept in touch until today.

The fact that Alex now lives a normal, happy life, is inspiring to the patients he visits. "When patients see me, they say, 'You don't look like you have IBD, are you sure you have the disease?'" Alex said. He encourages patients by telling them that even with IBD, they can, like him, go back to work, enjoy their social lives and move forward with life.

"The patients that Alex visits have high respect for him and treat him as a role model. He has shown that even with this chronic condition, you can still make the most of life," said Loy Kia Lan, Advanced Practice Nurse, Specialty Nursing, Singapore General Hospital, who nominated Alex for the award.

*If I'd known of someone who had experienced what I did, that would have made a big difference to me when I was in hospital. I'm happy to visit patients because I don't want them to feel they are in this alone.*

Mr Alex Wong (left) and Loy Kia Lan.



# HELPING MEDICAL RESEARCH THROUGH ART

MS HELINA CHAN

*I realised that there has not been a new drug in the market for the past 20 years, so I wanted to do something to change that.*

Ms Helina Chan, owner of iPreciation Gallery, is one of Singapore's most prominent gallerists who represents famous artists such as Taiwanese master sculptor Ju Ming and Nobel Laureate Gao Xingjian, also a renowned painter.

In 2006, at the height of her career, Helina was plagued with various ailments including severe water retention, numbness in parts of her body and excessive hair loss. Health checks showed she had an autoimmune disease which was then managed with medication.

But in 2010, the disease flared up and this time, she was diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease which attacks tissues and organs such as blood cells, skin and kidneys. A battery of tests found that she also had leaky kidneys and a dangerously low white blood cell count. This medical ordeal lasted two years.

"My doctor told me there is no cure," Helina recalled, "So I said, 'ok, when am I going to die?' He said 'Oh no, with the drugs that we have today, we can manage it.' I realised that there has not been a new drug in the market for the past 20 years, so I wanted to do something to change that."

This spurred Helina to find a way to help others like her. With this goal in mind, Helina organised a benefit dinner on 5 November 2014 at the Four Seasons Hotel to celebrate iPreciation Gallery's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary



and to launch the "Reverie Rheumatology Research Fund". The Fund aims to raise money for research into rheumatological diseases such as lupus. The event raised about S\$565,000. Helina explained why she decided to launch the Fund: "From my personal experience as a lupus patient, I understand the pain and struggles that individuals suffering from rheumatological diseases go through. I also realised that this field has not been sufficiently researched, particularly in Asia." Using art to champion a medical cause, she hopes to raise S\$3 million by 2016, and S\$12.5 million within ten years for the Fund.

Her doctor, Prof Julian Thumboo, Senior Consultant, Department of Rheumatology and Immunology at Singapore General Hospital, nominated Helina for the award. "Helina's positivity has encouraged and mobilised other patients to join her in organising meaningful events [like the Benefit Dinner] and inspired doctors to embark on philanthropy to raise more funds for research," said Prof Thumboo.

# DEFINING HER OWN JOURNEY

MS JOCELYN SUAREZ

*It is not the illness but  
the person that defines  
the journey.*

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Swollen eyes, fever and rashes — what she thought was an allergic reaction turned out to be far more complicated after Ms Jocelyn Suarez woke up three weeks later in the Intensive Care Unit at Singapore General Hospital. She was diagnosed with Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN), a life-threatening skin condition that causes inflammation and death of skin cells, usually triggered by ingesting certain medication.

As a result of TEN, Jocelyn lost most of her kidney function and had to be put on dialysis. “I couldn’t do anything more than move my fingers. I couldn’t even speak. And it hurt — everything hurt,” recalls Jocelyn, 24.

Jocelyn cites her family as her biggest pillar of support during the ordeal. “It was their faces I waited for every morning; faces that gave me hope.” Her family and friends also rallied around to raise more than \$48,000 for her medical bills.

After spending a month in ICU, Jocelyn came to fully appreciate the “skill and empathy” of the doctors and nurses. “I was a nurse before, so I could understand how hard it was to care for patients. However, I was



more than just a case or illness to them — they treated me with love, kindness and respect, and I will forever be thankful for that.”

Dr Lee Haur Yueh, Consultant at the Department of Dermatology, SGH nominated Jocelyn for this award given her “great resilience and tenacity despite being hospitalised for 66 days”.

One year on, Jocelyn has since gone back to work as a nurse and has even been actively participating in marathons.

The spunky survivor has these words of encouragement for fellow patients: “The fact that you have survived, that’s already more than half the battle won. It is not the illness but the person that defines the journey.”

# TRIUMPH OVER DISABILITY

## MR LEE YONG JIE

On the second last day of his internship in January 2014, while giving his farewell speech, 20-year-old polytechnic student, Lee Yong Jie suddenly lost consciousness. He was rushed to Singapore General Hospital and was found to have suffered a stroke due to a rupture of an abnormal blood vessel in his brain.

When Yong Jie awoke after surgery, he had become, in his own words, “like a baby again”. He had to re-learn the basics of everything — how to eat, sit upright, stand, and walk, as well as how to deal with his short term memory. “I was unable to do things on my own. I was frustrated and depressed at first. But I told myself to snap out of it when I saw how sad it made my mum and girlfriend to see me so upset. I told myself to be strong for them, so they could be strong for me,” he said.

Wanting to share his experience with others, Yong Jie decided to blog about his journey to recovery. “Blogging helps me gain more confidence in myself despite my disabilities. I wanted to educate people about how a stroke patient feels, and inspire other stroke patients out there to carry on living with grit and courage. I find blogging very therapeutic too; it’s a medium to vent my anger and frustration.” To his surprise, his blog was a hit with netizens — it was featured as the “Editor’s Pick” on Dayre, a mobile phone blogging platform, two weeks after being launched and it now has nearly 1,400 followers and 6,500 “likes”.

*I might be disabled in the  
body, but not at heart.*

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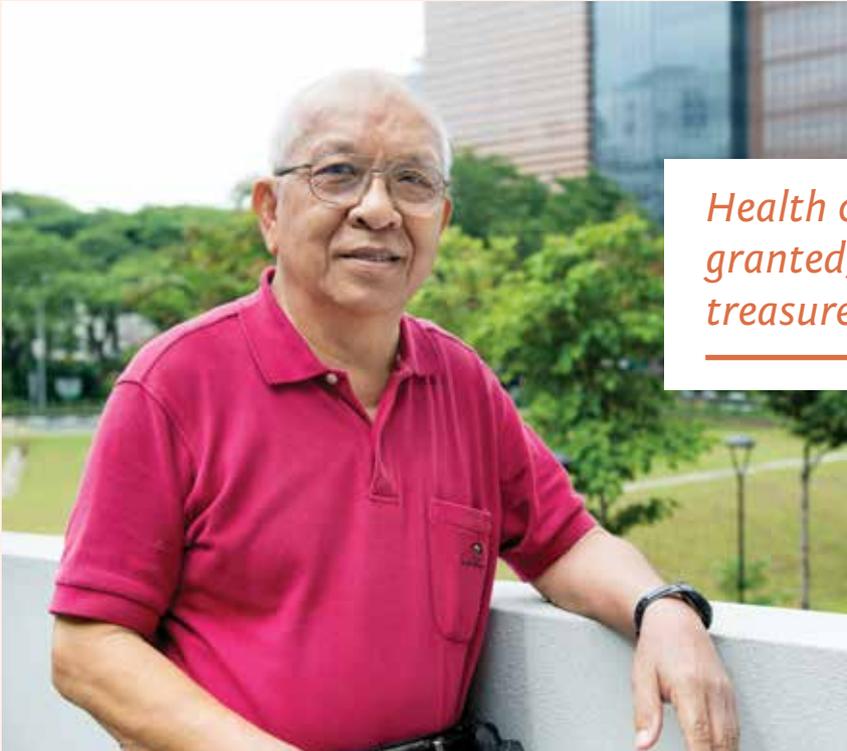
Mr Lee Yong Jie (right) and his mother.

Silvana Choo, Senior Occupational Therapist, Department of Occupational Therapy, Singapore General Hospital, who nominated Yong Jie for the award, praised him for being “the symbol of resilience”. Silvana remembered how Yong Jie often filled the ward with his laughter, bringing a positive energy to the room. “Yong Jie was a good student in therapy class who never gave up, no matter how tough the challenge of recovery was. I often encourage other patients to look to him for inspiration because if he can do it, they can too.”

When asked what the secret to his positive attitude was, Yong Jie quoted a Chinese saying: “I might be disabled in the body, but not at heart.”



# SPREADING HOPE TO OTHER PATIENTS



*Health cannot be taken for granted, hence we must treasure it.*

## MR LEONG TENG CHOW

Mr Leong Teng Chow, 78, has always been a positive person, so when he was diagnosed with rectal cancer in February 2004, he accepted the news in a calm and composed manner. "I believe that everything happens for a reason so when the doctor told me I had to undergo an operation, I had a 'go-ahead' attitude," Teng Chow said.

With his cancer now in remission, Teng Chow spends most of his time as a volunteer with the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) colorectal cancer support group where he shares his experience and supports other patients with the same condition. "I tell cancer patients that 'cancer is not an incurable disease. If it was incurable, then I would not be here speaking to all of you, 10 years after my diagnosis!'" Teng Chow said. "However, health cannot be taken for granted, hence we must treasure it."

The fact that Teng Chow had to live with a stoma bag did not demoralise him one bit. When patients share their concerns about wearing a stoma bag and whether it would make them smell, he smiles and says, "I'm wearing a bag, do you smell anything?" When they said 'No', he assures patients that things won't change and they can do just about anything, even wear shorts and go travelling."

Carol Loi, Genetic Counsellor, Department of Colorectal Surgery at SGH, recalled how Teng Chow showed unwavering optimism and courage during his illness. "He wants to share his journey to encourage newly diagnosed cancer patients to not lose hope in their battle against cancer. He supports and sees cancer patients through their difficult journey, hoping that things will turn out well for them," she shares. Indeed, Teng Chow's visits are always appreciated by patients. "He still insists in volunteering at his age because he feels that this is a good way to contribute back to society. His love for life and people is inspiring."

# THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP

MS MELISSA LIM

*Befriending can be powerful if you meet people who undergo setbacks but still live their lives well. You'll learn that everything doesn't have to be perfect for you to be happy, you can still have a very fulfilling life if your attitude towards life is right.*

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Ms Melissa Lim is a brain tumour survivor who has dedicated her life to helping other patients with the same disease. Diagnosed with Acoustic Neuroma, a non-cancerous and usually slow-growing tumour in October 2003, Melissa had the tumour removed the following year.

Recalling the time when there wasn't a support group she could turn to when she really needed help, Melissa felt that she would have benefitted tremendously from speaking with and learning from fellow patients who had gone through similar journeys. Once she recovered, Melissa set out to do her part to help other brain tumour patients in need of befriending and support.

The brain tumour support group at the National Neuroscience Institute proved to be what Melissa was looking for. She became an active member of the group, regularly visiting and supporting patients with brain tumours. In 2010, the group was dissolved but under Melissa's informal leadership, the core members of the group stayed in touch through regular gatherings.

A pivotal moment for the group occurred in November 2013 when Melissa represented Singapore at the International



Brain Tumour Alliance's First World Summit for Brain Tumour Advocacy and Support. The Summit was an eye-opening experience for Melissa and she brought back lessons from the event and shared them with members of the support group. The Summit also inspired her to form the Brain Tumour Society (Singapore) or BTSS in March 2014.

Melissa, who is the president of BTSS and her founding colleagues launched Singapore's first Brain Tumour Awareness Day on 1 November 2014 to raise awareness and funds for the local brain tumour community. Through fund raising activities such as Brainy Car Rally and the Brainy Joy Ride, BTSS raised a total of \$250,000. BTSS also organises support group meetings where brain tumour patients and caregivers gather to share their experiences and knowledge, as well as organise quarterly educational talks for the public.

Based on her personal experience, Melissa feels that BTSS is beneficial for brain tumour patients because they get to meet people. "Befriending can be powerful if you meet people who undergo setbacks but still live their lives well. You'll learn that everything doesn't have to be perfect for you to be happy; you can still have a very fulfilling life if your attitude towards life is right."

Nurse Clinician Usanee Chotphoksap, Specialty Care Services, Singapore General Hospital, who nominated Melissa for the award, describes Melissa as "an inspirational person, who has a selfless personality and a caring heart."

# SHARING HIS EXPERIENCE TO BENEFIT OTHERS

MR MUSTAFA KAMAL BIN ABU BAKAR

When Mr Mustafa Kamal Bin Abu Bakar was diagnosed with diabetes and kidney failure in 2012, he responded well to treatment initially. Unfortunately, unforeseen complications later resulted in the amputation of four toes on his right foot.

Having always been active, Mustafa could not imagine living the rest of his life in a wheelchair. He was so determined to walk again that he did all that he could to regain his mobility. "Sometimes I feel like I still have my toes but the reality is that they are gone," he said. Despite struggling to relearn how to walk, Mustafa refused to give up and kept practicing walking on his heel. "I can't walk like normal people do, so I have to learn to balance on my heel. It was difficult but I was determined to adapt."

Even though he had to go for dialysis three times a week, he still worked full-time as an engineering technician until he had to quit in June 2014 because of his health

condition. His wife is now the sole breadwinner of the family, as his three children aged 10, 11 and 18 are still in school.

Despite all the challenges he faces, Mustafa remains upbeat about life because his family has rallied around him to give him support. His sister, brother and daughter take turns to accompany him to the hospital while his wife and sister take turns to take him to the dialysis centre.

"Mr Mustafa always showed a positive attitude despite multiple admissions due to problems with his right foot," said Chang Yee Yee, Nurse Clinician, Specialty Care Services, Singapore General Hospital, who nominated Mustafa for the award. "Because he wanted to help other patients, Mr Mustafa readily agreed for us to use his case as a case study to teach junior nurses how to take care of wounds like his."

Mustafa observed that a high percentage of Malays like himself suffer from diabetes and hoped that by sharing his experience, it would encourage other patients not to give up.

*It was difficult but I was determined to adapt.*

Mr Mustafa Kamal Bin Abu Bakar (right) and his sister, Ms Suraiya.

# HELPING SO OTHERS WON'T SUFFER

MDM NANCY CHUA

When Mdm Nancy Chua found out that she had breast cancer in December 2004, she cried for two weeks. After multiple discussions with her husband, she made the difficult decision to go for a mastectomy. After surgery, she joined the breast cancer support group at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) as she appreciated the importance of having support and a listening ear during difficult times, and had wanted to help others in a similar situation. Unfortunately, breast cancer struck again in 2013 and Nancy had another mastectomy done. After a couple of months, she was back on her feet again, helping fellow patients in the support group.

"I don't want to see people suffer like me. If I can help fellow cancer patients with their problems, I will. I can't be sitting at home doing nothing," said the 69-year-old.

Nancy's dedication to voluntary work for the last nine years was what motivated N. Saraswathi, Senior Nurse Clinician, Specialty Care Services, Singapore General Hospital, to nominate her for this award. Saraswathi said, "Nancy visits patients after they've had surgery to give them emotional support. She calls every morning without fail to find out if there are patients for her to

see, so much so that we know it's her when the phone rings in the morning!" According to Saraswathi, Nancy's liveliness and positive outlook in life comforts these patients, and serves as a great source of motivation for them to get better.

As a volunteer with Singapore Cancer Society, Nancy helps patients apply for subsidies for cancer treatment, which can be very expensive. "When patients get the subsidies, it eases part of their financial burden and they are relieved," Nancy said. "With one less problem to worry about, they can focus on getting well."

Saraswathi has high praise for Nancy. "Nancy has carried out her volunteer duties with great passion all these years. Her commitment to any assignment is beyond what one can expect from a volunteer. She is very keen to learn more about cancer treatment so she can be a reliable resource person to patients. Her enthusiasm in learning and caring for patients is admirable," said Saraswathi.

*I don't want to see people suffer like me. If I can help fellow cancer patients with their problems, I will. I can't be sitting at home doing nothing.*

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# ONE DAY AT A TIME

MR POH KHOON YONG

*I told myself to be hopeful and take one day at a time as a way of coping with the illness.*

Mr Poh Khoon Yong was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue in 2003 and he has undergone five major surgeries to date.

The diagnosis came as a shock to him as he had always led a healthy lifestyle — he does not smoke and drink — and eats a diet of mainly fruits and vegetables. “I was unable to accept my illness at first but my wife encouraged me and gave me such strong moral support. I soon learnt to accept my condition and became more positive about it,” said Khoon Yong.

The hardest time for Khoon Yong post-surgery was when he had to undergo radiotherapy. When he first went through it, he was in a lot of pain — it felt like his whole body was burning and he was plagued with frequent headaches. Despite the pain, Khoon Yong remained positive and believed that the worst would be over soon. “Even after going through so much, I never thought of giving up,” Khoon Yong said. “I told myself to be hopeful and take one day at a time as a way of coping with the illness.”

The radiotherapy left him with painful blisters in his mouth, so he went on a liquid diet. Khoon Yong’s wife, Mdm Seah Geok Siam, was a constant source of support to her husband throughout his ordeal. Since Khoon Yong couldn’t chew and had to be on a liquid diet, his wife would wake up early to prepare a blend of oatmeal and fruits for his breakfast. For dinner, she would take time to prepare a nutritious blend of rice, wolfberries and barley for him.



Mr Poh Khoon Yong (left) and his wife, Mdm Seah Geok Siam.

Having gone through so much, Khoon Yong thought it would be meaningful to share his experience with other patients. A regular volunteer with the National Cancer Centre Singapore, Khoon Yong often shares tips on how to cope with the side effects of radiotherapy. “I have met many patients who had similar experiences. We shared what our wives cooked for us with other patients who had ulcers and needed to be on a liquid diet,” Khoon Yong said. “I wanted to let them know that they’re not alone, that I went through the same experience as them and hopefully that can encourage them to see things in a more positive light.”

Tay Ai Choo, Senior Nurse Clinician, Specialty Care at Singapore General Hospital, who nominated Khoon Yong for the award, said, “I was inspired by Mr Poh’s strong will to fight the disease and always look on the bright side.”

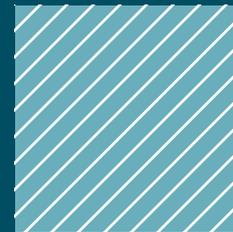


# OUR INSPIRATIONAL CAREGIVERS

Mr Michael Koh  
Mrs Kaliyana Sundaresan  
Mdm Keh Li Ching

Mr Low Swee Chai  
Mdm Tan Swee Eng  
Ms Choy Wenhui

Mr Woo Sen Chuan  
Mdm Chua Soh Chen  
Mr Benson Sim



# LOVE CONQUERS ALL

MR MICHAEL KOH YEW KIM

Mr Michael Koh, 73, was a model of devotion when it came to caring for his late wife, Mdm Lee Lay Khuan. Diagnosed with lung cancer in 2008, Lay Khuan spent her final five months at Bright Vision Hospital (BVH).

Michael visited his wife daily during her stay at BVH, encouraging her with loving words, attending to her needs and giving her moral support.

On each visit, he insisted on feeding his wife. His hands-on care for her moved the nurses at the ward and they would joke that Michael could pass off as a staff member.

Though Lay Khuan's illness was tough for Michael to deal with, he found strength in his Christian faith. "I had a lot of spiritual support through my church," he says.

The love that the couple shared was touching. "When I held her, from the look on her face you could feel our closeness," he says. Sometimes Michael was tired and told his wife that he had to go home, and she would always give him a warm and beautiful smile. "So I would delay leaving just to talk to her some more and play some of her favourite hymns for her on my phone."

Michael is an inspiration to other caregivers in the palliative caregiver support group. He listens to their struggles and gives words of encouragement when they

are feeling down. "Michael is indeed a selfless and caring person to everyone he knows," says Sandy Koh, Senior Medical Social Worker at BVH, who nominated Michael for the award.

On 16 April 2014, Mdm Lee passed on. Michael's thoughtful love for his wife could be seen when he asked his wife's favourite hair-stylist to make a wig for her so that she would look her best and always be remembered for her lovely looks.

Ultimately, Michael's positive attitude and his belief in counting his blessings are the very things that inspire those around him. "Over the last six years, we went through thick and thin together," he says, "But even when we struggled there was always love."

*Over the last six years, we went through thick and thin together. But even when we struggled there was always love.*

Mr Michael Koh Yew Kim (right) and Sandy Koh.



# PROVIDING **TIRELESS** SUPPORT



*Kaliyana always carries the hope that her husband's condition will improve one day.*

**Hariati Bte Sahak**  
who nominated Mrs Kaliyana Sundaresan  
for the award

Mrs Kaliyana Sundaresan (right), her husband, Mr V Sundaresan and Hariati Bte Sahak.

## MRS KALIYANA SUNDARESAN

When Mrs Kaliyana Sundaresan's husband, Mr V Sundaresan, was diagnosed with diabetes 15 years ago, she didn't realise that it was the start of more health problems for him. Due to the severity of his diabetes, Mr Sundaresan had to have his toes amputated. Shortly after, he had his right leg amputated above the knee. He was subsequently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and heart disease, and went through a bypass surgery in 2008.

It was a very stressful period for Kaliyana as she not only had to take care of her husband; she also became the sole breadwinner for her family as her two children were in primary school. She had to take on several part-time jobs to pay for her husband's medical fees as well as her children's schooling expenses. She would also take on odd jobs that required her to work till late to earn an extra income.

Despite gruelling hours at work, Kaliyana remains dedicated to caring for her husband. She looks into every

aspect of his needs, from managing his medication, which he has to take every three hours throughout the night, to preparing his daily meals. Her caregiving duties take a toll on her sometimes but Kaliyana has never thought of giving up. "I am tired, but I tell myself I have to carry on. If I don't take care of him, nobody else will," she says.

She shares that it is heartbreaking to watch her husband suffer. Recalling how caring and supportive her husband was to her before he became ill motivates Kaliyana to take better care of him.

Kaliyana's selfless nature is also evident in her care for others. She makes it a point to visit a friend who is wheelchair bound, offering help whenever possible.

Hariati Bte Sahak, Acting Nurse Clinician at the Home Nursing Foundation, who nominated Kaliyana for the award, said she was inspired by Kaliyana's optimism. "She always carries the hope that her husband's condition will improve one day," she said.

# A MOTHER'S DEVOTED LOVE



*Li Ching is the bravest and strongest mother I have ever known.*

**Dr Chiang Li Wei**  
who nominated Mdm Keh Li Ching for the award

## MDM KEH LI CHING

Mdm Keh Li Ching's three-year-old son, Nolan was diagnosed with biliary atresia (BA) when he was two months old. A life-threatening condition that occurs in 1 out of 16,000 infants, BA is a condition where the common bile duct between the liver and small intestine is blocked or absent. Bile then becomes trapped, builds up, and damages the liver. Without treatment, the liver eventually fails and the infant needs a liver transplant to stay alive. To treat the illness, Nolan underwent major surgery known as the Kasai procedure when he was just 64 days old.

When Nolan was just a year old, he had to be hospitalised several times for long periods due to liver infection which was one of the side effects of the procedure. As a working mother, it was tough on Li Ching as she had to juggle work and her care for Nolan. Often, she would spend the night at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) where her son was hospitalised, to keep him company. "There were many times when I felt like giving up," she said, "Mornings and late nights were the hardest, especially in the middle of the night when I couldn't sleep. I was afraid

that I might lose my son. It was difficult but after a while, you get into a routine; a new normal."

Dr Chiang Li Wei, Consultant, Department of Paediatric Surgery at KKH, who nominated Li Ching for the award, said, "Li Ching is the bravest and strongest mother I have ever known. The most devastating thing about this illness is its unpredictability. Even if the patient seems to be doing well, any bile duct infection may warrant a liver transplantation. What is amazing about Li Ching is that she decided to cast aside this fear of uncertainty and instead focus on helping other parents."

Despite her busy working schedule, Li Ching volunteers to reach out to other parents whose children have BA. As there is no support group specifically for BA in Singapore, Li Ching is the medical team's first line of help whenever a parent of a BA child needs companionship or support. To assure them that they are not alone, Li Ching shares her experience and offers her contact number so they can reach her when in need. "When the parents contact me, I don't immediately tell them 'you can do it!' because I think they need time to grieve. Give yourself time to grieve and accept the news, then build a new normal so that you know how to care for your child and what to look out for," said Li Ching.

# A ROCK TO RELY ON

## MR LOW SWEE CHAI

As the main caregiver for his two children and wife, who each suffer from different medical conditions, Mr Low Swee Chai's own medical condition is the last thing on his mind.

Swee Chai suffers from chronic pain due to arthritis, rotator cuff disorder and hyperextended toes. His 11-year-old son, Bernard, was born premature and has cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Because he has special needs and is wheelchair-bound, Bernard depends largely on his father for his daily needs. Swee Chai's daughter, 18-year-old Celia, has moderate intellectual disability and is unable to speak in fluent sentences and needs her father's help to ensure that she understands directions to her workplace. Swee Chai also looks after his wife, Mdm Tok Bee Li, who has end stage renal failure and requires regular kidney dialysis.

Despite his own medical condition, Swee Chai always puts the needs of his family members before his own.

Eleen Lim, Senior Medical Social Worker, Department of Medical Social Work, KK Women's and Children's Hospital, who nominated Swee Chai for the award, was touched and inspired by his selfless care for his family. Eleen recalled a time when Swee Chai delayed going for an operation, risking the loss in use of his arm, until proper care arrangements could be made for his sickly wife and children.

"Mr Low has always been a co-operative and understanding parent," said Eleen, "He is humble in his approach and is always appreciative of the help he gets. Despite the challenging situation that he faces in life, he never fails to show care and concern towards staff in our department, making it a pleasure for us to interact with him."

On top of his caregiving duties, Swee Chai also handles household chores such as laundry and cleaning for the family. When asked how he copes with adversity, he said, "We take one thing at a time. We believe in being independent and not relying on others."

*We take one thing at a time. We believe in being independent and not relying on others.*

Mr Low Swee Chai (left), Mdm Tok Bee Li and their son, Bernard.

# UNWAVERING LOVE

MDM TAN SWEE ENG

In 2006, Mdm Tan Swee Eng's husband, Mr Ang Seng Lee, underwent a heart bypass surgery at the Singapore General Hospital. Under her meticulous care, Mr Ang recovered swiftly from this major surgery. But the loving couple was soon hit with another blow when Mr Ang was struck with stroke and brain cancer.

Mr Ang's condition which required round-the-clock care imposed a heavy burden on Swee Eng, 67, who was the primary caregiver for her husband for the past eight years. It was both physically and emotionally draining as she had to also deal with his extreme mood swings. When his condition took a turn for the worse in 2014, Swee Eng was determined to be with him right till the end.

During his last days at the hospital, Swee Eng was by her husband's side 24/7, staying overnight at the hospital and getting very little sleep. "I had to do a lot to pull through that painful period," she said. Even when her son-in-law told her — "you cannot be living in the hospital, let the nurses help you," Swee Eng refused to leave the hospital, as she knew her presence would make a difference to her husband's mental and emotional well-being. Mr Ang eventually succumbed to his illness in November 2014.

Dr Tira Tan, Registrar, Division of Medical Oncology at the National Cancer Centre Singapore, who nominated Swee Eng for the award, described her as an exceptional caregiver who made sure that her husband attended every clinic session, radiotherapy appointment and complied with his medication. "Mdm Tan tirelessly and selflessly cared for her husband singlehandedly. Her selfless devotion is testament of her unwavering love for her husband and is truly an inspiration," Dr Tan said.

*I had to do a lot to pull through that painful period but I wanted to be with my husband right till the end.*



# YOUNG CAREGIVER WHO MAKES A DIFFERENCE

*I'll be thankful if each day goes by smoothly and if all my loved ones are well and happy.*



## MS CHOY WENHUI

Ms Choy Wenhui's father, Mr Choy Kiam Seng, suffered a severe heart attack in 1998 and was further diagnosed with heart failure in 2013. He underwent a successful Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) implant which gave him a new lease on life. Following the implant, Mr Choy had to make many lifestyle changes — in addition to going for regular check-ups, blood tests and taking medication, he also had to stick to a strict diet.

At age 27, Wenhui became the main caregiver for her father. As Mr Choy was hospitalized multiple times before his LVAD procedure, Wenhui quit her job to find another that offered more flexible working hours so that she could look after him. Cheng Shi Xuan Nilawan, Staff Nurse at Ward 56, National Heart Centre Singapore, who nominated Wenhui for the award, praised her for the many ways that she cares for her father.

For instance, whenever Mr Choy was admitted for his recurrent gastrointestinal bleeding, Wenhui would be there all day and night to tend to his needs. To better care for her father, she even took the initiative to do research on her father's condition and the possible side effects of his medication. "Her care was not limited to her father but to other patients in the ward too, helping them with simple tasks such as pouring water for them when they could not reach for the flask," said Nurse Cheng.

When asked what advice she could share with other patients and caregivers, Wenhui said, "I would tell them to never give up, and stay positive. We may never fully recover from a medical condition, but we should never give up. We should keep our hopes high and be thankful for whatever little miracles that come our way. Personally, I'll be thankful if each day goes by smoothly and if all my loved ones are well and happy."

# A HUSBAND'S LOVE AND DEDICATION

## MR WOO SEN CHUAN

In October 2013, Mdm Ting Tai Hong, who had been suffering persistent stinging pain in her left eye, went to the National University Hospital (NUH) for an eye check-up, hoping to find the cause of the pain. On that very day, Mdm Ting suffered a severe stroke which left her bedbound.

Mdm Ting was then hospitalised for about two months. Mr Woo Sen Chuan, then 72 years old, became the main caregiver for his wife. It was tough for Mr Woo, given his age and own chronic conditions such as asthma.

"Initially, it was tough at NUH," Mr Woo recalled. "I didn't go home for ten days as my wife was critically ill in the ICU and I had to be around for her. I wished for her to return home and so I learnt to do everything to care for her, at the hospital." Mdm Ting also had to have multiple operations as her condition was not stable.

After the initial struggles, Mdm Ting was moved to Ren Ci Hospital for step-down long term care as her care needs

were too high for Mr Woo to manage at home. Mr Woo has now settled into a routine of supporting his wife. He commutes three to four hours every day to visit her at the hospital where he helps her with her daily exercise. "I do daily hand and feet exercises with my wife, in addition to the rehab therapy regime by the Ren Ci staff," Mr Woo said, "Her muscles are really tense so the most important thing is to help relax her muscles. I also give her a full body massage every day."

To encourage others who are facing similar challenges, Mr Woo said, "I'll tell them to take it easy and take things one step at a time." Knowing the importance of keeping fit, Mr Woo regularly does Taiji. He also teaches Taiji to encourage others to stay healthy.

Alice Choo, Senior Medical Social Worker, Department of Social Work and Counselling at Ren Ci Hospital, who nominated Mr Woo for the award, said, "I admire Mr Woo's selflessness and commitment to care for his wife. I especially admire his tireless energy and am touched by how, despite his failing health, he continues the long commutes daily to visit and care for his wife."

*Take it easy and take things one step at a time.*



# A MOTHER'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE



*Whenever I see Josiah in pain, I wish that I am the one who's sick instead.*

## MDM CHUA SOH CHEN

Mdm Chua Soh Chen has faced many challenges caring for her son Josiah since he was a baby, as he was diagnosed with sub-normal IQ and suffered from epilepsy. Medication has kept his epilepsy under control, but another challenge arose when Josiah was diagnosed with chronic megacolon at age 13. It is a condition whereby the colon is abnormally enlarged, causing problems with bowel movement. Because of this, he had to be admitted to Singapore General Hospital (SGH) every two months for a year.

"Whenever I see Josiah in pain, I wish that I am the one who's sick instead," said the loving mother, who quit her job as a purchasing assistant in 2012 to care for Josiah.

To help Josiah with his bowel movements, the doctor recommended water irrigation, whereby water is infused into the rectum to cleanse the colon. The method works well, but requires Soh Chen to meticulously administer it for Josiah on alternate evenings. Her hands would inevitably get dirty with faeces after the water irrigation. "My hands would smell even after washing them

countless times," she said. But Soh Chen's love for Josiah is so strong that nothing is too distasteful for her as long as she can help her son, who is now 25 years old.

Unsurprisingly, when asked what she finds most challenging when caring for her son, she could think of nothing. Soh Chen's positivity is evident from how she even used her own situation to encourage a troubled friend whose son has Down's syndrome.

The devoted mother describes herself as a happy-go-lucky person who doesn't let difficulties get her down. "Life is not always smooth," said Soh Chen. "But I believe that things will get better if I stay strong. I just do my best to bring Josiah up in the best way that I can."

Ong Choo Eng, Senior Nurse Clinician, Specialty Care Services, SGH, who nominated Soh Chen for the award, recalled how there were occasions when Soh Chen would call her a few times a night when she faced problems with the water irrigation procedure. "I have never seen a mother so dedicated in caring for her son. I was touched by the amazing love she has for her son. Her tireless care and concern for him cannot be described in words."

# A PASSION FOR VOLUNTEERISM



MR BENSON SIM

Mr Benson Sim is a model volunteer caregiver who has helped not one, but eleven patients with various medical conditions over the last 20 years.

One of them is Uncle Seah, a 90-year-old gentleman whom Benson got to know in 2000 through mutual friends. Uncle Seah goes to Benson's house every morning for a home-cooked healthy meal. Given Uncle Seah's old age and chewing problems, Benson patiently cuts the food up for him into small pieces so that he can chew properly. Benson was also by his side when the elderly man had to undergo an operation to clear a blockage in his intestine in

*It pains me to see someone suffering, so I try my best to help.*

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November 2012. For two weeks, Benson visited him three times a day at the hospital. After his discharge, Benson visited him for a week at home, helping him to shower.

Benson recalls that during those three weeks when he was helping Uncle Seah, he was also taking care of a Buddhist nun who underwent a lung cancer operation at Mount Elizabeth Hospital. He would cook lunch for her in the morning, prior to visiting Uncle Seah. "It was tough looking after two people at the same time, but I never gave up," said 65-year-old Benson, who suffers from several chronic conditions. "It pains me to see someone suffering, so I try my best to help."

The caring man even takes it upon himself to make sure that his friends' medical conditions are kept under control. Since 2006, he has been accompanying four of his friends aged 65 to 83 to the Singapore National Eye Centre for regular check-ups. When his friends have difficulty understanding the advice from medical professionals, Benson helps to translate it into Mandarin or dialects. He also reminds them to take their medication.

"These patients have had cataract surgery to restore their vision because of Benson's actions. Benson is a role model and inspiration for Singaporeans to take up volunteerism as a way of life. He helps others whose lives are lit up because of his compassion," said Dr Allan Fong, Deputy Head and Consultant, General Cataract and Comprehensive Ophthalmology Service, Singapore National Eye Centre, who nominated Benson for the award.

# PAST WINNERS

2014

## CAREGIVERS

### **Bright Vision Hospital**

Mr Kua Sim Choon  
Mdm Mary Goh

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Mdm Norahan  
Ms Sharon Sia  
Mr Vincent Tang Puay Boon  
Mr Zaric Foo

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

Ms Felinn Shoo Pei Qi

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Mr William Tan Soon Huat

### **National Neuroscience Institute**

Mr Gan Cha  
Mdm Pauline Goh

### **Singapore General Hospital**

Mr Akhil Jain  
Mr Ang Kim Seng  
Mr Eddie Tan Kie Chai  
Mdm Natalia Nugroho  
Mdm Josie Liow

### **Singapore National Eye Centre**

Mdm Cecilia Lee  
Mdm Juliana Katherine Yip

## PATIENTS

### **ECON Healthcare Group**

Mdm Lee Siew Yin  
Mr Lian Keng Heong

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Ms Zhang Pei Shan  
Mr Zul Kamuradin

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

Mdm Rosita Mary Cedillo  
Mdm Wong Poh Eng

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Ms Serene Lee Shu Lynn  
Ms Tan Swee Hiang

### **National Neuroscience Institute**

Mdm Foo Yip Mun  
Mdm Shannon Heo

### **Singapore General Hospital**

Mdm Helen Wong Siew Kheng  
Mr Loh Wan Heng  
Mr Michael Lee  
Mr Royston Hogan  
The Late Ms Tan Ai Ngin

### **SingHealth Polyclinics**

Mr Vincent Francis Spykerman

## CAREGIVERS

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Mr Daniel & Mrs Karen Oon  
Ms Fadiana Binte Dahlan  
Ms Rae Mok Rui Wen

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

Mr Chong Ah Tat & Ms Chong Shun Mei  
Mr Sundarajoo Panirsilvam

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Mr Atago Shuto  
Mr Peter Lim

### **National Neuroscience Institute**

Ms Angelia Choo  
Mdm Mislina Kasman

### **Ren Ci Hospital**

Mdm Doris Goh Fun Cheng

### **Singapore General Hospital**

Mdm Chua Seng Lan  
Ms Hayati Suaidi  
Mrs Christine Peterson  
Mr Shao Liwei  
Mdm Tay L H

### **Singapore National Eye Centre**

Mdm Keng C L  
Mdm Toh Gea Kim

### **SingHealth Polyclinics**

Ms Christine Chew Ai Ling  
Mdm Pan Chiak Lin  
Mdm Tan Bock Hway  
Ms Rachel Wong Fui Lih

### **Tan Tock Seng Hospital**

Ms Serena Siau Kim Ooi

## PATIENTS

### **Ang Mo Kio - Thye Hua Kwan Hospital**

Mr Basheer Ahmad s/o Mohamed Jaffar  
Mr Hazlan Bin Abas  
Mdm Sara Bte Ariffin  
Ms Doreen Goh

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Ms Caline Chua Lee Ling  
Mr Kenrick Seah Gui Dong  
The Late Mr Mohamed Baasha s/o Mohamed Yasin

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

Mr Chong Ah Huat  
Ms Merle McIntyre  
Ms Jenny Teo Bee Moy

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Ms Haziqah Binte Idris

### **National Neuroscience Institute**

Ms Bridget Ang  
Mdm Sumathi

### **Ren Ci Hospital**

Mdm Wong Wai Chong

### **Singapore General Hospital**

Ms Cheong Lee Meng  
Mdm Leong Wah Kin  
Mr Pay Gang Yi, Wilson  
Mr Ravinder Singh  
Mr Shiv

### **Singapore National Eye Centre**

Ms Ong Hui Xin

### **SingHealth Polyclinics**

Mdm Ho Buay Geok

2012

## CAREGIVERS

### **Eastern Health Alliance**

Ms Grace Melican Etrata  
Mr Ismail Bin Mohamed  
Ms Parliyah Tariyo Sasmito  
Mdm Sabita Devi d/o Amrit Lal

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Mr Kenneth Mah Yee Wah  
Ms Isabella Sim May Lin  
Ms Yong Seek Ying

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

Mr Mah Wai Meng  
Ms Vivien Tan Liyun

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Ms Diana Seet

### **National Neuroscience Institute**

Ms Ellen Goh Lee Peng  
Mdm Pan Meng Zhu

### **Singapore General Hospital**

Mdm Chan Geok Lian  
Ms Chan Soh Chin  
Mdm Faridah Abdul Rahman  
Mdm Hoo Sew Lin  
Ms Naw Hnin Wai Lwin

### **Singapore National Eye Centre**

Mrs Neo (Mdm Lau Lee Ping)  
Mdm Lee Siew Chow

### **SingHealth Polyclinics**

Ms Catherine Tan

## PATIENTS

### **Eastern Health Alliance**

Mr Andrew Ang Kim Ka  
Mr Phillips Richard Edward  
Ms Suzanah Shariff  
Mr Tan Keng Kian

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Ms Kelly Ang Yin Ping  
Mdm Goh Bee Khim  
Ms Dora Goh Siok Kian

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

The Late Ms Yvonne Tan Li May

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Mr Rahman Bin Abdullah  
Mr Senthil Nathan

### **National Neuroscience Institute**

Ms Gracie Lim Cheng Neo

### **Singapore General Hospital**

The Late Ms Isabel Chua Seah Hong  
Ms Felicia Lee Lay Hoon  
Mr Louis Ng Swee Kiong  
The Late Mr Su Kin Seng  
Mr Tung Shee Kee

### **Singapore National Eye Centre**

Ms Charmaine Tan Xing En

### **SingHealth Polyclinics**

Mr Ang Huat Chye  
Mr Benny Lee Kim Hock  
Mr EJ

2011

## CAREGIVERS

### Changi General Hospital

John & Martina Lim  
Ms Belinda Layson Malate  
Ms Suhana Binte Suhaimi

### KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Ms Cheng Fong Mui  
Ms Sharon Sia  
Mdm Amanda Soh Siok Hong

### National Cancer Centre Singapore

Mdm Leow Yuh Eng  
Ms Sharon Tay Siew Kee

### National Heart Centre Singapore

Mr Ravinder Prasad Pathak  
Mdm Sarah B Binte Abdul Rasid

### Singapore General Hospital

Mdm Anjana Rai Chaudhuri  
Mr Lee Peng Lee  
Mdm Leela d/o Ramalingam  
Mr Mok Siow Juay  
Mr Salam Ismail

### Singapore National Eye Centre

Mdm Fong Kam Ngoh

### SingHealth Polyclinics

Mdm Ann Nah Miow Sim

## PATIENTS

### Changi General Hospital

Mr Abdul Muhaimin Bin Abdul Malik  
Mr Chng Joo Cheng  
Mdm Jane Lim Siew Cheng

### KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Mr Goh Chun Hui  
Ms Tan Lay Sing  
Ms Phyllis Yap Njuek Phing

### National Cancer Centre Singapore

The Late Ms Elizabeth Poey Cheng Wah  
Mdm Quek Peck Eng

### National Heart Centre Singapore

Mr Kalaiselvan s/o Kalian  
Ms Salina Binte Mohd So'ot

### National Neuroscience Institute

The Late Mr Ong Geok Lam

### Singapore General Hospital

Mr Kwek Joo Kwang  
Mr Lim Zi Yang  
Mr Mohideen Pillai Syed  
Mdm Ng Gek Eng  
Mr Kenneth Tan Ting Feng

### Singapore National Eye Centre

Mr Clarence Chan Hok Wah

### SingHealth Polyclinics

Mr Jeffrey Goh  
Mr Seow Yoke Beng  
Mdm Teo Pui Gek

2010

## PATIENTS

### **Changi General Hospital**

Mr Ronald Koh  
Mr Roland Vivian Simon

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital**

Ms Susan Ginsberg  
Mr Randy Tan  
Ms Natalie Wong

### **National Cancer Centre Singapore**

The Late Ms Helen Hee

### **National Heart Centre Singapore**

Mdm Tan Chwee Suan

### **Singapore General Hospital**

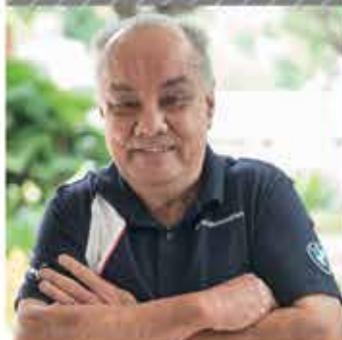
Mr Ho Soon  
The Late Mr Joey Kong  
Mr Linus Lin

### **Singapore National Eye Centre**

Mr Tee Wee Leong

### **SingHealth Polyclinics**

Mr Ho Kai Chiew  
Mr Khoo Kay Lock  
Mr Tan Thian Seng



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