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Editor's Note

THE FIRST STEP
TO TAKE IS TO
LIKE US ON 



At Parkway Cancer Centre, patients and their loved ones are at the heart of all that we do. Our brand of cancer care promises not only quality care but seamlessly coordinated care that is delivered holistically and under one roof.

Committed to making cancer care accessible to all and to better care for our patients, we continue to pursue growth because doing so allows us to reach and serve more people, in more parts of the world.

We'd love to hear from you! Do you have any interesting stories or any ideas to share with us? Please email us at enquiry@pcc.sg

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UPCLOSE AND PERSONAL

with the Medical Director,
Dr Ang Peng Tiam



Q&A

DR ANG, WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME AN ONCOLOGIST?

Cancer medicine was not considered a glamorous sub-specialty of Internal Medicine. In fact, it was not my first choice after I passed my higher exams in Internal Medicine. It was Dr Kwa Soon Bee, then the Permanent Secretary (Health) and Director of Medical Services, who encouraged me to consider specialising in Medical Oncology. I can still remember the meeting we had in his office at the Ministry of Health, when he explained how Singapore needed more specialists in three areas, one of which was cancer.

When I came back from my oncology fellowship at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and Stanford University Medical Center in 1990, I was trained medical oncologist number 5 in Singapore. There were three in the private sector, one at the National University Hospital and I was the one and only medical oncologist at Singapore General Hospital. I was given the mandate to set up a Department of Medical Oncology and to train medical oncologists to meet the manpower needs of our nation.

I remained as the Head of Department and Director of the Oncology Centre until I left for private practice in 1997. Even after I left, I continued to serve as a visiting consultant for many years until my services were no longer needed.

Today, there are no fewer than 100 doctors who are either trained or in training to be medical oncologists. It is a very much sought after sub-specialty because of the many advances in the field.

CARING FOR YOU AROUND THE GLOBE

Parkway Cancer Centre now brings quality cancer care to more parts of the world. Our newest addition is our representative office in New Delhi. Set up in April 2016, CanHOPE New Delhi consists of a team of 3 dedicated members and is led by Mr Nakul Singh.

Passionate for patient care, Mr Nakul Singh has been working very closely with Parkway Cancer Centre and Parkway Hospital Singapore for more than a decade, serving and helping hundreds of patients in India who need haematology and renal care.

The new centre will provide existing patients with cancer support and care, during and after treatment. With the prevalence of cancer disease coupled with lack of resources, it is tough to find reliable cancer related information in India. CanHOPE New Delhi will focus on working with dedicated NGOs and partners to reach out to the public and spread awareness of cancer.

CanHOPE New Delhi

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TELL US WHAT A TYPICAL DAY IS LIKE AT PARKWAY CANCER CENTRE.

I am at the hospital every day by 7am. I start the day doing my ward round on all the inpatients under my care. By about 9am, I am already in the clinic seeing patients. I carry on seeing patients until about 7pm, when I go back to the wards to see the patients who are more sick and need to be reviewed before I head home.

Many patients are curious whether I have lunch because the clinic does not stop running at lunch time. The fact is I usually do not take lunch, but what I do have each day is a big thermos flask of home-made soup, which I drink between seeing patients.

Many marvel at the number of patients I see each day but the truth is I really enjoy clinical work. I have a great rapport with the majority of my patients. They are very much like friends and family to me. There is often a lot of laughter in my consultation room because we enjoy ribbing one another, sharing the joy in their lives and our triumphs over cancer.

FACING DEATH EVERY DAY MUST BRING YOU EXTREME HIGHS AND LOWS. HOW DO YOU MANAGE EMOTIONALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY?

I don't know how I manage it but I simply do. I have faith in God and I know all that I can do is my best. Whatever happens after that is beyond my control. I try not to take the glory for the successes we enjoy and I try not to be too harsh on myself for the failures that come my way.

IS IT DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE WORK FROM HOME LIFE?

I have an understanding wife and family. It helps that she is a doctor and all my four children are in Medicine. One has completed her training in Internal Medicine and is now training to be a medical oncologist and the other three are still in medical school. I often talk about my work when I'm at home. I share with them stories about my patients - both the heartwarming ones as well as the "medical disasters". Perhaps, that is one of the reasons they each decided on their own to pursue a career in medicine.

YOUR PATIENTS HAVE SAID YOU HAVE A VERY ENCOURAGING ATTITUDE. WHERE DOES YOUR CONSTANT POSITIVITY SPRING FROM?

I have lived a blessed life. From my childhood to school days, from medical school to life in the military, from early years as a young doctor to the higher echelons of hospital leadership, I can think of the many people have come into my life, to make things a little easier and more comfortable for me.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THOSE BATTLING CANCER? HOW CAN THEY BEST OFFER SUPPORT?

It is very important for each cancer patient to have the support of family and friends. Their most important role is to encourage the cancer patient in his/her fight. The battle can sometimes be very difficult for the patient physically and emotionally. Even if one does not know what to say, just offering a listening ear may suffice.

At Parkway Cancer Centre, we have a team of CanHOPE counsellors to help our patients come to terms and cope with their illness. They are assisted by many volunteer CanFriends who themselves may either be cancer patients or have journeyed with cancer patients.

WHAT DO YOU WISH THE PUBLIC WERE MORE AWARE OF WITH REGARDS TO CANCER?

We need to be aware that the incidence of cancer is on the rise. In some instances, we can prevent cancer - living healthily, eating in moderation, exercising regularly, do not smoke, vaccinate against Hepatitis B and the Human Papilloma Virus to prevent liver cancer and cervical cancer. There is much we can do to try to detect cancer early through mammograms for breast cancer, Pap smear for cervical cancer and coloscopy for colorectal cancer.

SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

1 JUN WED	3.30pm – 5.00pm Appetising Modified Meals for Cancer Patients Mount Elizabeth Hospital Seminar Room, Level 2
4 JUN SAT	10.00am – 12.00pm Zumba Mount Elizabeth Hospital Seminar Room, Level 2
8 JUN WED	2.00pm – 5.00pm Look Good Feel Better Gleneagles Hospital Board Room, Level 3
10 JUN FRI	10.00am – 12.00pm Expat Cancer Support Group The British Club, Singapore Windsor Terrace
11 JUN SAT	10.00am – 12.00pm Line Dance Mount Elizabeth Hospital Seminar Room, Level 2
24 JUN FRI	10.00am – 12.00pm Expat Cancer Support Group The British Club, Singapore Windsor Terrace
25 JUN SAT	10.00am – 12.30pm Adjusting to Changes – (for Patients) Mount Elizabeth Hospital Seminar Room, Level 2
29 JUN WED	3.00pm – 4.30pm Adjusting to Changes – (for Caregivers) Gleneagles Hospital Board Room, Level 3

2 JUL SAT	10.00am – 12.00pm Zumba Mount Elizabeth Hospital Seminar Room Level 2
9 JUL SAT	10.00am – 12.00pm Line Dance Mount Elizabeth Hospital Seminar Room Level 2
13 JUL WED	10.00am – 12.00pm Nutrition Talk – Interpreting Food Labels Mount Elizabeth Hospital ACR Room, Level 2
14 JUL THU	3.00pm – 5.00pm Art Therapy: Safety Net Gleneagles Hospital CanHOPE Activity Room, Level 3
15 JUL FRI	10.00am – 12.00pm Having a Will/Lasting Power of Attorney Mount Elizabeth Hospital ACR Room, Level 2
27 JUL WED	3.00pm – 4.30pm Adjusting to Changes – (for Caregivers) Gleneagles Hospital Board Room Level 3
30 JUL SAT	10.00am – 12.30pm Adjusting to Changes – (for Patients) Gleneagles Hospital Board Room Level 3



WHAT MEASURES CAN PEOPLE TAKE TO BE BETTER PREPARED BEFORE CANCER STRIKES?

It is difficult to prepare oneself for cancer. Cancer almost always strikes when one least expects it. The sad truth is that the large majority of cancers are diagnosed at advanced stages.

This is because cancer in its early stages have no symptoms. Also, the symptoms of cancer are fairly non-specific - the cough that one gets may simply be due to throat infection or sinusitis. Yet, it may be due to lung cancer. The blood in the stools may be due to haemorrhoids, yet it could also be due to colorectal cancer.

What is important is how one handles the situation after being diagnosed with cancer. It is important to stay calm and don't panic. See a doctor or even several doctors to get a good understanding of the problem at hand and the various options available. I have seen many patients rush into treatment without careful consideration of the alternatives that may be available in the treatment of cancer.

HOW HAS CANCER RESEARCH ADVANCED IN THE LAST DECADE? WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS LIKE FOR CANCER PATIENTS THESE DAYS?

When I first started my training in oncology, there were but a handful of chemotherapy drugs available. Over the past two decades, there has been an explosion in the discovery and development of new drugs for treating cancer. These chemotherapy drugs, targeted agents and monoclonal antibodies are more effective than ever before. They tend also to have much less toxicity compared to the older drugs. We also now have many drugs that help to minimise the side-effects of treatment so that patients can have a better quality-of-life.

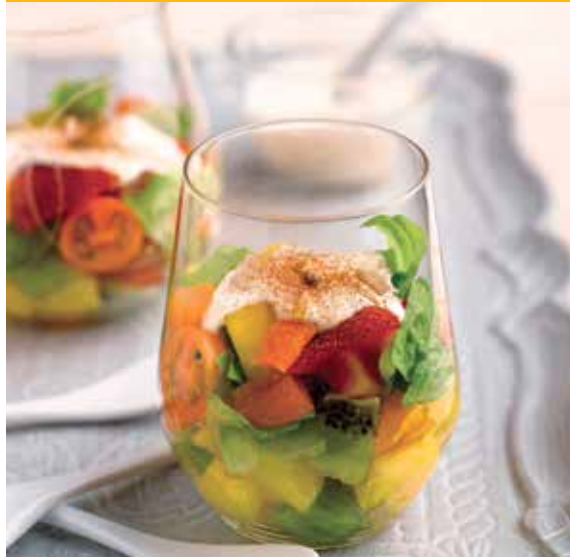
For many patients with advanced cancer, the disease is now more like a chronic illness. Although it cannot be cured, it can often be controlled almost always for months, often for years and sometimes for decades by simply continuing treatment.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE – PERSONAL AND OTHERWISE?

My hope for the future is a world without illness, poverty and conflict. For myself, I only want grandchildren.... lots of them! :)

ASK THE DIETITIAN

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How does a healthy diet contribute to the prevention of cancer?

The World Cancer Research Fund and American Institute for Cancer Research reviewed thousands of studies and provided a summary of factors that help in preventing cancer and cancer recurrence.

These are:

- Body Fatness: Be as lean as possible within the normal range of body weight
- Physical Activity: Be physically active as part of everyday life
- Limit consumption of energy-dense foods, avoid sugary drinks
- Eat mostly foods of plant origin
- Limit intake of red meat and avoid processed meat
- Limit alcoholic drinks; men not more than 2 drinks per day and women not more than 1 drink per day
- Limit consumption of salted foods, smoked foods, avoid mouldy cereals, grains and pulse
- Aim to meet nutritional needs through diet alone, if supplement is needed, ensure of known reason

There is no one particular food that prevents cancer, it involves changes in lifestyle and that includes eating habits, food choices and physical activities.

What should this healthy diet look like? What should we avoid? What should we eat more of and why?

Limit processed meats like ham, bacon, salami and sausages. Nitrates or nitrites added to them, or the smoking and drying process may produce N-nitroso, a compound that may be carcinogenic.

Carcinogen in foods are as follows:

Moulds & toxins

- Aflatoxin in cereals, grains and peanuts
- Fumonisin in maize

Food preparation

- Heterocyclic amines – cooking meat at high temperature, e.g. deep frying
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons – produced in meat and fish that has been grilled or barbecued over direct flame
- N-nitroso, formed in foods containing added nitrates/nitrites, e.g. in meat and fish preserved with salt, preservatives, smoking or drying

The above has been known to increase risk of cancer.

How does a healthy weight help cancer prevention?

Based on meta analysis study reported above (American Institute for Cancer Research), having a healthy weight reduces one's risk of developing cancer. It does not mean that it will prevent cancer.

What else should we know about food and diet with regard to cancer prevention, management and recovery?

One important message is to use fresh ingredients and natural foods in cooking. For example use fish or chicken or meat as supposed to using fish balls, chicken nuggets, or meat patties. The latter may have added preservatives, fillers and are considered processed foods.

It helps to plan in advance what to cook, hence raw ingredients can be thawed and ready to be cooked by the time you reach home. Otherwise you will likely reach for convenience packed frozen processed foods.

Consumption of alcohol does increase the risk of head & neck, oesophageal, colorectal and breast cancer.

Researchers have identified multiple ways that alcohol may increase the risk of cancer, including:

- Generating reactive oxygen species (chemically reactive molecules that contain oxygen), which can damage DNA, proteins, and lipids (fats) through a process called oxidation
- Impairing the body's ability to break down and absorb a variety of nutrients that may be associated with cancer risk, including vitamin A; nutrients in the vitamin B complex, such as folate; vitamin C; vitamin D; vitamin E; and carotenoids
- Increasing blood levels of estrogen, a sex hormone linked to the risk of breast cancer

Alcoholic beverages may also contain a variety of carcinogenic contaminants that are introduced during fermentation and production, such as nitrosamines, asbestos fibers, phenols and hydrocarbons.

CONTACT US

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Mount Elizabeth Novena Specialist Centre	38 Irrawaddy Road #05-43, 50 to 55 Singapore 329563
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