

# SingVision

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2012

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# Dr Quah Boon Long

Senior Consultant

Head, Paediatric Ophthalmology & Adult Strabismus Service  
Singapore National Eye Centre & KK Women's and Children's Hospital

*For Dr Quah Boon Long, he has always been interested in science from his early days in school. Also, when he was a child he was "awestruck" by the kind doctor who took care of him when he was ill.*

It is not surprising then that Dr Quah decided to become a doctor. He said, "I consider the medical profession the noblest of all. I always wanted to be that kind doctor to cure people of their sickness and save lives. To marry my love for science with a scientific profession so fundamentally important to humanity is a marvellous thing."

Dr Quah chose to specialise in ophthalmology because he loves microsurgery. He enjoys operating on an organ so small and yet so delicate and complex as the human eye. What pleases him is restoring visual function for his patients.

According to Dr Quah, the most common eye condition in children in Singapore is myopia, which is also the most common eye disorder in the world. The other common eye conditions in childhood include lazy eye, squint, allergic eye disorders, and eye or eyelid infection.

Dr Quah said that myopia progression in children can be slowed down in majority of cases by using atropine eye drops for several years. The eye drops unfortunately have side effects, such as blurring of near vision and increased sensitivity to light. The long-term side effect of atropine eyedrops is not known, and myopia can still progress after treatment is stopped.

However, the Singapore Eye Research Institute has conducted several studies which showed that lower concentrations of atropine eye drops have fewer side effects and are almost as effective.

Dr Quah's advice to parents is to be alert to any sign of eye or visual disorders in their children and bring the child to see a doctor if they suspect such problems.

They should also prevent their children from playing with sharp-edged objects and objects made of glass that may cause eye injury, and keep them away from prolonged near work activities such as playing hand-held and computer games.



**“** Children four years old and above, should have their eyes checked every year **”**

- says Dr Quah

**Myopia cannot be reversed or cured. But it can be slowed down or prevented. Practising good eye care habits is one of the best ways to prevent myopia in your child.**

Ensure good lighting when doing near work.

Take vision breaks of 5 to 10 minutes after every 30 to 45 minutes of near work.

Hold reading / writing materials a minimum of 30 cm away from the eyes.

Avoid reading materials with very small font/faded print as more effort is needed to focus on the words resulting in eye strain.

Sit about 50 cm from the computer.

Do not read lying down.

Engage in outdoor activities daily.

Have enough sleep.

# THE LANCET

## Three SNEC / SERI papers featured in The Lancet

The Lancet is one of the world's oldest and most respected medical journals which publishes original research and review articles on all aspects of health. It is a weekly publication read by physicians all over the world.

Doctors and scientists from the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) and the Singapore Eye Research Institute (SERI) had the honour of having three of their papers published in the May issue of The Lancet. In-depth reviews of the leading causes of myopia and age-related macular degeneration were featured. The third article was on the advances in corneal transplantation. This bears testimony to the international recognition of SNEC and SERI's clinical and research excellence on the global platform.

Professor Donald Tan, Medical Director, SNEC contributed to the review on corneal transplantation. He highlighted that conventional penetrating transplant procedures are being replaced by sutureless key-hole transplants. These include Endothelial Keratoplasty (EK) and Deep Anterior Lamellar Keratoplasty (DALK), which provide improved visual outcomes, higher graft survival rates, and less post-operative complications. SNEC performs 85 percent of all corneal grafts in Singapore.

The review which was co-authored by leading global experts on corneal transplantation - Ed Holland (from the USA), John Dart (UK) and S Kinoshita (Japan) - also covered developments in artificial cornea technology, stem cell transplants, and corneal endothelial therapies.

Professor Wong Tien Yin, Director, SERI and Senior Consultant, SNEC together with Dr Laurence Lim, Associate Consultant, SNEC wrote about the causes of Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD). AMD is a major cause of blinding conditions worldwide. The paper highlighted the major risk factors for the disease such as smoking.

On myopia, which affects 80 percent of teenagers in Singapore, Professor Saw Seang Mei of SERI and the National University of Singapore (NUS) linked reduced time playing outdoors to the high prevalence of the condition.



# SNEC shares stage with leading eye centres at the World Ophthalmology Congress



SNEC was invited to share its best practices at the 33rd World Ophthalmology Congress 2012 which was held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates on 16-20 February. More than 10,000 ophthalmologists, eye care professionals and administrators from 136 countries attended the congress.

Ms Charity Wai, Chief Operating Officer, spoke on 'Collaborative Partnership: The Way Forward' in the hospital management programme which was attended by eye hospital administrators from around the world. Besides Ms Wai, the faculty included other leaders of renowned eye centres such as Wilmer Eye Institute of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (USA), Moorfields Eye Hospital (UK), The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (USA) and the Magrabi Hospitals and Centres (Middle East). The programme covered wide ranging topics on hospital operations such as enhanced service quality initiatives and evaluation of new medical technologies. It was organized in collaboration with the World Association of Eye Hospitals in which SNEC is a founding member.

## SNEC hosted visitor from The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary

“

*I was very impressed with every aspect of what I saw and who I met at the Singapore National Eye Centre. Clearly, the expertise, commitment to quality and outcomes, aesthetics, focus on physician and patient needs as well as efficiency and solid clinical and administrative leadership was evident in everything I observed and everyone I was fortunate enough to meet. Best wishes for continued success.*

”

- Mr Allan Fine, Senior Vice-President,  
Chief Strategy and Operations Officer of  
The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary

# Serving the Community

## Reaching Out to 2,500 Students

Given the high incidence of myopia among school going children, Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) has organised eye care talks at two schools recently in conjunction with the Lions Save Sight Centre.

On 26 March 2012, pupils from Eunos Primary School learned about myopia and the importance of practising good eye habits from Ms Lisa Ong, Principal Optometrist. On the same day, another talk was conducted for pupils of Pasir Ris Secondary School by Ms Siow Kalin, Chief Optometrist, who emphasised proper contact lens use. Improper lens care is the leading cause of serious eye infections in Singapore. Students picked up eye care tips as well as participated in the interactive quiz segment. In all, about 2,500 students benefitted and more of such talks are being planned.



## Eye Screening at Macpherson Community Centre and Ling Kwang Nursing Home

As part of SNEC community outreach, doctors and nurses from the centre conducted free eye screening at the MacPherson Community Centre on 19 February 2012. 80 residents were screened that Sunday morning as the service was brought right to their 'door step'.

Similarly, a week later on 26 February 2012, another team of doctors and nurses went to Ling Kwang Nursing Home in Serangoon Gardens and screened some 106 elderly residents for aged-related conditions like cataract and glaucoma. These residents are non-ambulant and needed assistance in moving around, usually in wheel-chairs. Hence, most residents could not avail themselves to the eye screening programme because of the added challenge of travelling to a hospital. This eye screening programme by SNEC at the nursing home was well received.



## Eye Care Campaign in the University

Students from the Nanyang Technological University's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information recently undertook a project called 'At First Sight' with the support of SNEC. The project was a hit with the undergraduates and was featured in the Straits Times.

The project entailed a two-month campaign to educate tertiary students on proper eye care. One of the main topics was on the safe use of contact lenses where Dr Lim Li, senior consultant ophthalmologist and Head (Clinical Service and Education) with SNEC's Cornea Service, provided expert advice. Many students are using contact lenses not just to correct their vision but also for cosmetic reasons. They buy them over the counter or via the internet. Without prescription by an eye specialist or a qualified practitioner, these contact lenses are potentially harmful to the eye. Activities for the campaign included talks, exhibitions and a photography competition.

The Straits Times, Saturday, 24 March 2012, Page D8

### Eye-opener for project group

By SIM YI WEN

SO WHO would have thought that we would learn as much as we were trying to impart when we decided on our final-year project?

We had decided to focus on contact-lens care among the young, as improper lens care is the leading cause of serious eye infections in Singapore - a key finding of the Singapore National Eye Centre.

Our campaign advocating proper contact-lens care, named "At First Sight", was born. We surveyed 300 young people to identify the key problems to address in our project:

- Wearing contact lenses for prolonged periods;
- Wearing them past their replacement dates;
- Buying them from unauthorised retailers;
- Using cosmetic lenses daily; and
- Lack of proper cleaning procedures and regular eye checks.

The survey revealed that more than half of the respondents were guilty of all these transgressions, the most common being not cleaning their lenses correctly. In fact, only 42 said they stuck to the recommended rub-and-rinse method.

We chose a three-pronged approach for our campaign to reach out to as many young people as possible.

We held a pseudo tarot card reading session, had a seven-day challenge in which participants had to blog about their experiences, and organised an online photography competition.

The tarot card reading sessions were held at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), the National University of Singapore and Singapore Management University. The tarot cards were specially designed to incorporate eye-care tips, which were "read" to students by one of our group members dressed as a gypsy.

For the seven-day challenge, we had seven people post their experiences with the key problems we had identified. Videos that featured their horror stories with contact lenses were also uploaded weekly on the campaign's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ProjectAtFirstSight](http://www.facebook.com/ProjectAtFirstSight)) to help young people relate to the cause.

The online photography competition required young people to send in photos of scenery, activities or objects that held significant value to them and their loved ones.

The top 20 entries were exhibited at NTU, where visitors selected their favourites and made pledges of commitment by writing down how the entries they picked inspired them to take better care of their eyes and adopt proper lens-care habits.

The competition was meant to help young people understand how losing their sight from severe eye infections could affect the activities they enjoyed.

As a team, we learnt a great deal from our campaign. For instance, group member Karyn Tay, 23, a contact-lens wearer, has since become more diligent in cleaning her lenses.

"At First Sight" has turned out to be more than an educational campaign for the masses - it has also been a learning journey for my team.

The writer, 23, is a final-year communication studies student at NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

# Congratulations to the following staff on their appointments to the Academic Clinical Program for Ophthalmology (EYE-ACP)

**PROF DONALD TAN**

Academic Chair



**PROF WONG TIEN YIN**

Academic Vice Chair  
(Research)



**DR IAN YEO**

Academic Vice Chair  
(Education) &  
Director, Professional  
and Postgraduate  
Education



**PROF AUNG TIN**

Academic Deputy Vice  
Chair (Research)



**ADJ ASSOC PROF  
SEAH LAY LENG**

Director,  
Undergraduate  
Education



**ADJ ASSOC PROF  
LEE SHU YEN**

Director,  
Undergraduate  
Education



# Heart of Healthcare

*Nursing has come a long way since the days of Florence Nightingale. Today, nurses are held in high regard as advocates and health educators for patients, their families and to the community. They now play an important role in the delivery of affordable, accessible and quality healthcare.*

Taking on many different roles every day, nurses work closely with doctors in the treatment of patients, to educate them and promote health. 'Caring', 'dedicated', 'goes the extra mile for patients' are hallmarks of excellent nurses we often meet in the course of a visit to the clinic or hospital.

Ms Belinda Toh, Acting Nurse Clinician and a state registered nurse, is one of such nurses. As a recipient of this year's SingHealth Excellence Awards, Belinda was awarded the Group Chief Executive Officer's Awards (Outstanding Nurse Award) in a ceremony at the Shangri-La Hotel in March.



**Acting Nurse Clinician Belinda receiving her Outstanding Nurse Award from SingHealth's Group CEO, Prof Ivy Ng**

"She truly cares for the well-being and outcome of each and every patient under her care," said her supervisor, Ms Margaret Tan, Deputy Director of Nursing, SNEC. Belinda is a role model to all those who work with her. In addition to her top-notch nursing skills, what sets her apart is her ability to empathize and communicate with patients, doctors and other colleagues.

Noted for her excellent organizational skills, Belinda created a 'learning environment' in her department where staff are encouraged to share their knowledge and clinical skills. She has shown dedication to nurturing younger nurses and motivating them with her own enthusiasm for continuous learning.

As one of her senior doctors said, "Once you meet her, you will like and trust her because of her warm and pleasant personality."

## Congratulations

### 2nd SingHealth Excellence Awards GCEO Excellence Awards

#### Outstanding Clinician Award

Assoc Prof Chee Soon Phaik  
Senior Consultant  
Head, Ocular Inflammation and Immunology Service  
Head, Cataract Service

#### Outstanding Nurse Award

Ms Belinda Toh  
Acting Nurse Clinician  
Outpatient Department

#### Outstanding Allied Health Professional Award

Ms Siow Kalin  
Chief Optometrist  
Refractive Surgery Service

#### Outstanding Ancillary Staff Award

Ms Irene Lee  
Executive  
Outpatient Department

#### Outstanding Administrative Staff Award

Ravi Chandran  
Manager, Public Relations

Promoted to Senior Consultant  
Adjunct. Assoc Prof Tina Wong  
Glaucoma Service

Promoted to Consultant  
Dr Morgan Yang  
Oculoplastic & Aesthetic Eyeplastic Service

Promoted to Associate Consultant  
Dr Gavin Tan  
Vitreous Retina Service

Promoted to Senior Director  
Ms Jeanny Lau  
Human Resource

Ms Serene Foo  
Quality Service

Citation for Attainment of  
Highest Academic Average  
By College for International Studies,  
Pennsylvania College of Optometry

Ms Carin Tan  
Optometrist

Healthcare Humanity Award 2012  
The Courage Fund

Dr Marcus Ang  
Registrar

Accepted into the  
Khoo Scholars Programme  
Dr Anna Tan  
Registrar

# Calendar of Events

## For Ophthalmologists

Check out <http://www.sneconline.org>  
for more details

### 3RD VISUAL ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY COURSE

Hands-On Workshop

Audience : Ophthalmologists/Ophthalmology Trainees  
Date : Saturday, 15 September 2012  
Venue : Auditorium, Level 4, Tower Block, SNEC

*Visual Electrophysiology provides us with an objective assessment of visual function. In this course, we will update you on the range of electrophysiology tests available and when they are useful and when they are not.*

*In addition, we will present its use in a variety of retina, neuro-ophthalmology and paediatric settings, so as to provide participants with a better appreciation of how visual electrophysiology can be used in clinical practice together with a hands-on workshop demonstrating how the test is performed.*

## For Nursing and Allied Health Professionals

Check out <http://www.sneconline.org>  
for more details

### UPDATES ON GLAUCOMA FOR OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS

Audience : Optometrists and Opticians  
Date : Saturday, 25 August 2012  
Venue : Auditorium, Level 4, Tower Block, SNEC

*This course outlines the relevant clinical examination and investigatory techniques for the detection of acute and chronic glaucoma. It is essential that at-risk patients have a thorough check up for glaucoma at every opportunity as it is largely an asymptomatic disease. Early detection allows timely initiation of treatment, ensuring that patients retain useful vision for the rest of their lives.*

## SNEC Eye-ducation series of Public Talks

Check out <http://www.sneconline.org>  
for more details

*Singapore National Eye Centre organises various community outreach and engagement programmes with the aim of educating and creating awareness of blinding eye diseases through eye screening, talks and exhibitions.*

• SingVision™ is a publication of the Singapore National Eye Centre  
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