

Endocrine Matters

An interview with Dr Stanley Liew

by Gloria D. Gamat

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Dr Stanley Liew is not only a long-time contributor to Medical Grapevine, but he is also a member of our Advisory Board. Dr Liew has always been very generous in contributing his expertise to us, in whatever way he can.

An Endocrinologist and Consultant at Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre, Dr Liew specialises in diabetes, thyroid disorders, lipid disorders, and other endocrine disorders.

Having obtained his basic medical degree from University College London Medical School in 1994, he then continued his training in Internal Medicine in London and was conferred the award of MRCP (UK) in 1998.

Upon his return to Singapore, Dr Liew pursued subspecialty training in Endocrinology at the National University Hospital, and was accredited with Specialist Certification in Endocrinology. In 2003, he returned to the United Kingdom to further his postgraduate training at the Oxford Centre of Diabetes and Metabolism, UK.

Dr Liew previously headed the Diabetes Clinic and Weight Management Programme at the National University Hospital. Currently, he is the President of the Singapore Association for the Study of Obesity.

As we join in observance of Diabetes Awareness Month, we are finally able to feature Dr Stanley Liew on the cover. Indeed, it has long been overdue.



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What was the driving force that made you decide to become a doctor? And why the interest to specialise in Endocrinology in particular?

Dr Liew: The driving force behind my decision to become a doctor was my belief that medicine is an intellectually stimulating career. It involves life-long learning as it is constantly changing with new discoveries and research. Most importantly, it allows me to alleviate human suffering and contribute to the society. During my undergraduate training, I was fascinated by the complex ways in which our body functions. Endocrinology was a specialty which captivated my interest. It is concerned with the study of hormones and how

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they coordinate different body functions.

What were the difficulties and challenges you encountered when you were just starting, and as you advanced in your career?

Dr Liew: The first couple of years of the medical course required a considerable amount of rote learning. Medical examinations were also tough and intimidating. One of the early challenges I faced was in coping with the death of patients. It was not easy to witness the death of a patient for the first time. It is even more difficult if we know the patient for some time.

What are the important milestones and achievements that you are most proud of?

Dr Liew: One of my proud moments was when a patient expressed his appreciation of my treatment of his medical condition. It made me feel that all the years of hard work and learning was worth it.

Through the years, are there developments in your specialty that have been positive or negative? What is your stand on this?

Dr Liew: The field of diabetes has been evolving at a rapid pace in the last few decades. The developments have been positive because the new discoveries and treatments have improved the quality of life of millions of people with diabetes. I am a strong advocate of preventive medicine.

What do you think could be done better in your field of specialisation?

Dr Liew: I believe that more can be done in increasing the awareness of the dangers of diabetes. Many patients are still unaware that diabetes can lead to serious health problems such as heart attack, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and limb loss. Some of these complications can be avoided if their diabetes is controlled better.

What would you consider to be the best things about your work?

Dr Liew: It is a great privilege of my profession to be able to make a difference to our patients' quality of life. In terms of my own specialty, I can put into practice my belief in preventive medicine. For example, early and good control of diabetes prevents complications such as gangrene, renal failure, stroke and heart disease.

How does work affect your family life?

Dr Liew: Indeed, I am very fortunate to have a capable wife who helps me shoulder the responsibilities of raising a family. Her help and support is a huge blessing, and very much appreciated.

Aside from your profession, what other things in life are you most passionate about?

Dr Liew: I enjoy reading about current affairs, business news and politics. I like to keep abreast of the latest developments in other parts of the world.

If you can live your life all over again, would you still aspire to become a doctor and choose the same specialties?

Dr Liew: Definitely. I would still choose to be a doctor because I have thoroughly enjoyed being one. Practising medicine is stimulating. I face challenging cases and get to learn new information each day.

Any words of wisdom for aspiring young doctors out there?

Dr Liew: Listen to and learn from patients. They teach us much more than all the textbooks out there. **MG**