

PUSHING FRONTIERS

Dr Lim Ing Haan, Cardiologist at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre shares with Mosaic what she is all about.

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As the only female interventionalist in Singapore, Dr Lim Ing Haan is a person with passion and commitment.

In her books, a good cardiologist should have up-to-date knowledge and relevant skills to treat the patient, especially interventional cardiologists who deal with catheter-based treatment of structural heart diseases. With only 20 in Japan and five in Australia, Dr Lim is one of the very few female interventional cardiologists in the region. Together, they set up Women in Innovation in 2009. This is an international peer association of like-minded dynamic female interventional cardiologists. It is a worldwide effort devoted to improving treatment of cardiovascular disease in women. The association recently met in Jakarta and Seoul, and will next convene in Paris.

SECRETS TO HER SUCCESS

At home in her Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre (MEMC) Clinic, she sees both local and foreign patients. The foreign patients travel from Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, China and even Russia. Most get to know of her through word-of-mouth, while others are referred by their own doctors.

Empathising with the patients and understanding their needs are her strengths, and that may be the key to her successful career, believes Dr Lim. "Patients are at their most vulnerable when they are at the hospital. It is a doctor's job not just to treat, but also to comfort. At the end of the day, you must treat the patient as a whole, not just a heart or an artery."

It is the same reason that drives her to embrace and develop new techniques for angioplasty, such as using the radial artery (wrist) route, as opposed to the usual femoral artery (groin) route.

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bleeding, and better for patient comfort.” Dr Lim has travelled regularly to Japan where highly skilled new techniques for complex cases are constantly being developed. To Dr Lim, promoting special skill sets that are superior to prototypical ways of doing things is just as important. An example is mitral valve clipping, which she performed during her one-year stint in Duke University Medical Centre in the US. The new procedure allows patients to avoid surgery.

TEACH, AND YOU WILL LEARN

Before moving to the private sector, Dr Lim worked in Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) and National University Hospital. Starting off with a group practice, Dr Lim eventually set up her current practice in MEMC in August 2010.

Still, Dr Lim goes back occasionally as a visiting consultant to both TTSH and National University Hospital to teach junior doctors. She says, “I believe you can only remain up-to-date when you pass on the knowledge to someone else. Otherwise, with time, your own knowledge will disappear. I also do it for self-actualisation as it makes me feel more complete as a physician.”

Although the teaching opportunities are fewer now as commitment to her patients takes precedence, she continues to support

the public sector by helping with the acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) calls at TTSH. These are usually at night and therefore do not affect her time with her patients.

ON THE HOME FRONT

Her dedication extends to her family too. She and her husband, Dr Gregory Leong, a partner with Shenton Family Medical Clinics, have a six-year-old son. She spends time teaching him personally after work every day.

She also accompanies him to his soccer classes. However, instead of kicking off her shoes and relaxing with her favourite pastimes of reading or listening to music, she puts on her running shoes and gets a good workout around the soccer field.

She was just as active in her childhood, the fondest memory of which is the constant companionship of her twin sister Dr Lim Ing Ruen. From a young age, they both aspired to become doctors, and relied on each other’s support throughout medical school and the early years of their medical career, parting ways only when they chose different specialities. Dr Lim Ing Ruen is now an ENT surgeon.

When asked about her greatest wish, Dr Lim is quick to say that it is for her son to grow up to be a well-balanced, socially responsible adult. As for herself, she says, “I hope to do the best for my patients.” 

