

NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE SINGAPORE

In 2008, Ms Wong Chiou Wei found a lump in her left cheek which turned out to be cancerous. She consulted Professor Soo Khee Chee, the director of NCCS, who is also Senior Consultant at the Department of Surgical Oncology, who advised her to go for an operation to remove the tumour. Today, she is cancer-free and only needs to go for annual follow-ups at NCCS.



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NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE SINGAPORE ANNUAL REPORT 2009

BEHIND EVERY PATIENT



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"The NCCS is now into the next phase of its development as a national centre, having established a name for its cutting edge research and clinical trials. We have been successful in nurturing a research and teaching culture within our team of professionals many of whom are going to areas of sub-specialisation in their fields of expertise. These have immensely benefited our patients as many are now able to survive cancer and have a better quality of life.

Our scientists and clinicians are making an impact not only at home but also overseas where we are sharing our expertise and collaborating with other international cancer centres. We will soon acquire even more new medical technology and equipment to continue to stay at the forefront of cancer care and treatment, in sync with our partners in the SingHealth Group."

Prof Soo Khee Chee
Director, National Cancer Centre Singapore

PATIENT CARE

In December, the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) began a new treatment called tomotherapy. This treatment allows doctors to deliver more precise and targeted doses at the tumour, and thus avoid damage to surrounding tissue.

The treatment is delivered by a new machine that combines Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy treatment, inverse treatment planning and 3D imaging. The on-board imaging system allows doctors to verify the position of the tumour prior to delivering the treatment.

In addition, NCCS is undergoing Joint Commission International accreditation. As part of this, the centre is putting in place policies and refining processes to provide a safe environment for patients.

Even as the centre gears up for the JCI audit, our doctors continue to show their potential in delivering excellent patient service. During the year, Dr Ong Kong Wee, an Associate Consultant at the Department of Surgical Oncology at the NCCS was nominated for the Singapore Experience Award. The Singapore Experience Award is organised by the Singapore Tourism Board and recognises the best individuals and organisations in various fields. Dr Ong was a finalist in the Customer Service-Healthcare category.

EDUCATION

Last year, the Research Division of NCCS organised four lectures under the Humphrey Oei Distinguished Lectures series. The speakers included Nobel Prize winner Prof Harald Zur Hausen and Dr John Dick, Professor of Molecular Genetics at the University of Toronto.

In September 2009, a team of doctors and nurses went on a month-long study trip to the Washington Cancer Institute and the Washington Hospital Centre to fine-tune their experience in peritonectomy. This is a surgical procedure to remove the cancerous tumours in the peritoneum, a smooth, transparent, serous membrane which lines the cavity of the human body that is a common growth site for cancer.

The NCCS team subsequently returned and shared what they had learned in a seminar with more than 60 surgeons, oncologists and healthcare professionals from other healthcare institutions.

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RESEARCH

Dr Toh Han Chong, Head of the Department of Medical Oncology at NCCS, is leading a clinical trial of a new procedure to treat nasopharyngeal cancer (NPC). NPC affects close to 600 men annually in Singapore and is the sixth most common cancer worldwide. This disease is particularly common across southern China and Southeast Asia. Dr Toh and his team are examining the efficacy of the patient's own immune system in eradicating metastatic NPC. To date, the results have been very encouraging and side-effects have been minimal.

Dr Daniel SW Tan, a medical oncologist, has been conferred the Young Investigator Award by the American Society of Clinical Oncology Cancer Foundation. He is the first oncologist from Singapore to receive the award. The award comes with a grant that he is using for his research into treating NPC with a targeted drug.

Prof Teh Bin Tean, who is Director of NCCS-VARI Translational Research Laboratory and Distinguished Scientific Investigator at Van Andel Research Institute in Michigan is currently doing research to understand drug resistance with the aim of eventually creating customised treatments based on the genetic profiles of the cancer and patients.

For his efforts, Prof Teh was given the Singapore Translational Research Investigator Award in November 2009 by the Ministry of Health's National Medical Research Council (NMRC) and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

Prof Huynh The Hung from the Laboratory of Molecular Endocrinology at NCCS and his team have developed a way to test out drug combinations to provide personalised treatment for liver cancer. Tissue from the tumour is first implanted in immuno-deficient mice and grown. The team then applies different drug combinations to the tumour to see which combination is most effective.

Thanks to Prof Huynh's pioneering work, NCCS has joined hands with AstraZeneca, an Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical firm, to test drugs to combat liver cancer.

OUR PEOPLE

Dr Melissa Teo, Consultant (Surgical Oncology) returned from Canada after completing two fellowships in Canada and a Masters degree in the US. At Princess Margaret Hospital in Canada, she completed a fellowship in Surgical Oncology. In her second year, she decided to pursue Colorectal Surgery as a specialty, which took her to Mount Sinai and St Michael's Hospitals, where she performed more than 200 major colorectal surgical operations. She also enrolled in a Masters in Public Health (Health Policy and Management) programme from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore in the US. Thanks to her exposure to both surgical oncology and colorectal surgery, Dr Teo has emerged from her training a better oncologist and colorectal surgeon.

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When she first came to NCCS, doctors were baffled. Ms Dewi Hermawati (seated) suffered from fits, bouts of confusion and unexplained fevers. A month of investigation and therapy revealed a cyst in her left ovary, and she was diagnosed with encephalitis, an acute inflammation of the brain associated with cancer in the ovaries. The cyst was surgically removed but Ms Dewi's confusion persisted. The team of oncologists, including Dr Tiffany Tang, Registrar, Department of Medical Oncology, decided on aggressive chemotherapy to treat Ms Dewi. In twenty days, she started responding to the treatment. Four months after completing chemotherapy, Ms Dewi was well enough to return to work. Today, the active young woman is cured and living life to the fullest.



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Dr Daniel Tan, Associate Consultant (Medical Oncology) returned from The Royal Marsden Hospital in London UK. With a NMRC grant, he was attached to the Drug Development Unit where he also coordinated a research programme for the department. He spent nine months there, where he was involved in Phase 1 clinical trials, caring for participating patients, interacting with pharmaceutical companies and collaborating with other Phase 1 units in Europe and the US.

As a result of his fellowship, he is now better prepared to run clinical trials in Singapore which is a necessary step in uncovering new cancer-fighting drugs.

Five other oncologists were also sent for overseas training stints during the year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In May last year, NCCS completed the Wall of Hope project. This is a brick wall at the Outram Campus with 460 etched tiles affixed on it. The tiles express messages of hope from cancer patients, survivors, family members and caregivers. The 15-month long project raised over \$300,000 which will be directed towards lung cancer research.

On October 31 and November 1, Methodist Girls' School raised \$115,000 for NCCS to fund programmes for needy patients and their families through Sounds of Hope, a concert by performing arts groups from the school.

In September, NCCS launched its Second Liver Cancer Awareness Campaign that focussed on understanding fatty liver diseases, the risk of hepatitis and the current treatments and care for liver cancer. Public forums in English and Mandarin were held at the Paya Lebar Kovan Community Club.

In October, NCCS organised a mammogram marathon to encourage women over 50 to go for mammograms. A Pink Ribbon Cruise was also organised where doctors and volunteers from NCCS and Singapore General Hospital (SGH) brought breast cancer survivors and their loved ones for an evening cruise in November. Some 260 people took part in games, educational quizzes and enjoyed performances by the Main Wayang group during the four-hour event.

In November, more than 6,000 people came together to raise funds for cancer research at Run for Hope 2009. Close to \$300,000 was raised. Among those who participated were Ms Jessica Tan, the Member of Parliament for East Coast GRC and Mr David Sevigny, the Canadian High Commissioner. Cancer survivor Ezzy Wang ran 10km on crutches and completed the run in one hour and 30 minutes.

In September, some 800 guests came together for the 10th Anniversary Gala of Hope. Held at the Ritz-Carlton, the event raised almost \$1.1 million for cancer research from table sales, donations and auctions of paintings. President S. R. Nathan was the Guest of Honour.

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KEY FIGURES	FY 09	FY 08
Workload per annum		
Day Surgeries	10,967	11,534
Specialist Outpatient Clinic Attendances	128,418	129,265
Staffing (as at end Mar)		
Total	545	520
Doctors	112	112
Nurses	109	91
Allied Health Professionals	122	120
Others	202	198

Note: Staffing figures refer to Filled Posts, in terms of Full-Time Equivalent, and may not add up to total due to rounding.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Patient Care

Excellent Service Awards 2009
33 staff – 4 Star, 4 Gold, 25 Silver

National Day Awards 2009 (Efficiency)
Chiew Cheng Fong

GCEO Excellence Awards 2009
OPEN CATEGORY – CLINICAL SERVICE
A/Prof Koo Wen Hsin

Education

SingHealth-Lee Foundation Nursing Awards
Lee Kim Hua

Research

Singapore Translational Research (StaR) Award
Prof Teh Bin Tean

Clinician Scientist Award

Dr Toh Han Chong, Dr Joseph Wee

NRF-MOH Healthcare Research Scholarship (PhD)

Dr Iain Tan Bee Huat

NMRC Research Training Fellowship

Dr Richard Quek Hong Hui, Dr Wong Nan Soon

American Society of Clinical Oncology Award

Dr Daniel Tan Shao Weng