

Inspiring Healthy Living

# My Alvernia

60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



## Happy



*Serving all with Love*

# Anniversary

MOUNT ALVERNIA HOSPITAL



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- Anthropometry (Height, Weight, Fat Analysis)
- Resting ECG
- Urine FEME
- Stool for Occult Blood
- Hepatitis A Screen
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- Ultrasound - Abdomen

- Chest X-ray
- Full Blood Count
- Glucose
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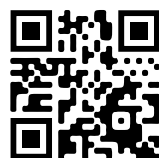
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# CEO's Message

It has been 60 years since the hospital was first opened by the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) Sisters in 1961. Originally known as a maternity and paediatric hospital, Mount Alvernia Hospital has transformed itself into a 319-bedder multi-disciplinary general hospital to serve the changing healthcare needs of the community over the years.

In the near future, more hospital developments like the new maternity and paediatric centre and an integrated oncology services centre will further define and shape our services to meet the ever-evolving medical needs of the population.

We were very happy to hold our 2-hour 'live' 60th Anniversary virtual event on 4 March 2021, where close to 300 guests tuned in to join in the celebrations. The virtual event was also aired on our hospital's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

After a warm welcome and a trip down memory lane, during which the milestones of the hospital's 60 years of journey were recapped, a series of pre-recorded congratulatory messages were shared. The messages hailed from far and wide, and included greetings from the Archbishop of Singapore and the Minister for Health.

Another highlight of the event was the debut of an original song, 'The Alvernia Way'. The moving piece was specially composed, arranged and performed by colleagues and friends of the hospital to commemorate our 60th Anniversary. It tells the story of our hospital's heritage, paying tribute to how our staff have continued to live the values of our FMDM Sisters while embracing change and moving forward during these unprecedented times.

This year, we also celebrate the diamond jubilee of two of our FMDM sisters, Sister Bernadette and Sister Florence. We salute them for 60 years of religious life in mission.

Sister Bernadette was a nurse in the maternity wards in the 1960s, during which she served many patients. Later, she worked for many years in the Pastoral Care Department, where she touched many lives with her love and compassion for the patients and their relatives. In April 2015, Sister Bernadette received the Healthcare Humanity Awards presented to Healthcare workers who have inspired the public with their exemplary compassion and commitment to deliver quality care with empathy for their patients.

Trained as a nurse, Sister Florence served many years in the hospital and managed the hospital from 1980 to 1983 as the Hospital Administrator. By that time, there were already more than 200 beds in the hospital. She assisted in numerous surgeries, served many patients, and did a lot of work fundraising for needy patients in both Mount Alvernia Hospital and Assisi Hospice.

While the hospital continues to grow in both capabilities and capacities, the Mount Alvernia Hospital family will always aim to live our core principles and values – to provide excellent medical services with compassion and care for everyone who enters our doors.

Let us continue to serve all with love and touch many more lives in the years ahead.

Happy 60th Anniversary!



**Dr James Lam Kian Ming**  
CEO  
Mount Alvernia Hospital



*Serving all with Love*

## Our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Logo

We share some insights on the symbolism of our anniversary logo.

### THE GRAPHIC

The line drawing depicts Mount Alvernia Hospital's first building in Singapore, while the use of handwritten fonts and nature-inspired graphics adds warmth and nostalgia. The five doves circling the logo represent Mount Alvernia Hospital's fundamental values of Compassion, Humility, Integrity, Respect and Peace. Their strategic arrangement in a circular formation suggests the synergy between these values, and how together they enable our people to go the extra mile for one another, patients, their families, and the underserved in the community.

### THE TAGLINE

The anniversary tagline 'Serving all with Love' reflects the wisdom and inspiration of our founding Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) Sisters, which we embrace and perpetuate daily. More significantly, it expresses our hospital's commitment to providing holistic healthcare, raising the quality of care, and serving patients with love – 60 years and beyond.

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1. Lesourd. Am J Clin Nutr, 1997;66:478s-484s | 2. Calder. BMJNPH. 2020;0. doi:10.1136/bmjnph-2020-000085. | 3. Milne, et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev, 2009. CD003288.

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## Dear D<sup>OC</sup> About Giddiness

**Q** What are the possible causes of giddiness?

**A** Conditions which may cause giddiness include the following: conditions of the brain such as stroke, bleed, tumour and migraine; vestibular or inner ear disorders; abnormal heart rhythm; high or low blood pressure; high or low blood sugar; low haemoglobin (anaemia); electrolyte disorders, e.g. low sodium level; and side effects from medications.

**Q** Is giddiness the same as vertigo?

**A** Giddiness is a feeling of light-headedness or imbalance, while vertigo is a sensation that you or your surrounding environment is moving or spinning. Vertigo usually occurs with inner ear disorders, but also overlaps with other conditions like migraine and certain types of strokes.

**Q** Do I need to consult a doctor if I feel giddy?

**A** You should seek medical attention if the giddiness is severe, or if you have any of the following: slurred speech; double vision; facial drooping; arm or leg weakness or numbness; unsteady gait; recent head trauma; near-fainting or loss of consciousness; chest pain, palpitations or cold sweats; bleeding – such as black or bloody stools, or heavy menses; recurrent

or prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea, especially with poor oral intake; and significantly high or low blood pressure or blood sugar readings.

**Q** What if I still feel giddy even after lying down? What if I constantly feel giddy?

**A** Inner ear disorders can cause giddiness on lying down, and symptoms may last a few days. If you were previously diagnosed with this condition, the giddiness is similar to past episodes and there are no red flags, you can consider self-medicating and observing first. However, if your symptoms worsen or red flags occur, you should see a doctor immediately.

**Q** Who should consult a doctor even if symptoms are mild?

**A** The elderly are at higher risk of having stroke, heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. They also tend to be on multiple medications, some of which may cause side effects. In addition, slower reflexes, visual impairment and frailty increase the risk of falls and injuries if giddiness is not treated.

This group should be assessed by a doctor to rule out more serious causes of giddiness and commence appropriate treatment early.

**Dr Oh Jen Jen**  
Head and Consultant  
24-Hr Clinic and Emergency Services  
Mount Alvernia Hospital

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# New Years, New Lives

Meet our lucky little ‘festive babies’ – the first to be born in Singapore in 2021, and the first to be born on Chinese New Year’s Day in the Year of the Ox.

## OUR NEW YEAR BABY

Reprising the honour of delivering Singapore’s first-born baby in 2020, Mount Alvernia Hospital was once again the lucky hospital to welcome the first baby born in Singapore in 2021.

“We are blessed to have a New Year baby and look forward to a double celebration every year – celebrating our baby’s birthday and New Year’s Day. We hope for good health and peace for our newborn.”

Yu Hui-Lan



Baby Nyomi and family

On New Year’s Day at the stroke of midnight, we welcomed little Chan Yu Tong Nyomi. She is the second child of Yu Hui-Lan and David Chan, and a little sister to 2-year-old Nolen Chan, who was also born at Mount Alvernia Hospital.

According to mummy, it was a bonus having her husband, David, by her side every day while he worked from home during the pandemic. It seems that every cloud has a silver lining, as the saying goes.

“We are blessed to have a New Year baby and look forward to a double celebration every year – celebrating our baby’s birthday and New Year’s Day. We hope for good health and peace for our newborn,” said Hui-Lan.

Ms Shirley Tay, Director of Nursing of Mount Alvernia Hospital, presented a special red packet and gifts to the Chan family.

“We are glad to be the Maternity Hospital of Choice for families and blessed to have the national first babies born at Mount Alvernia Hospital for two consecutive years – on both 2020 and 2021 New Year’s Day. We wish all babies good health and hope for a healthier, healing and peaceful 2021,” said Ms Tay.

## OUR CHINESE NEW YEAR BABY

Some six weeks later, we warmly welcomed our first 2021 Year of the Ox baby, little Kyden Liow, at 2.48am on 12 February 2021. Kyden is the third child of Alicia Chia and Kevin Liow, and a little brother to two older siblings who were also born at Mount Alvernia Hospital.

The Liow family was presented with a special red packet and gifts, including a hand-knitted outfit from Dr James Lam, CEO of Mount Alvernia Hospital.

Congratulations to the Chan and Liow families, and to all families of babies born during this challenging yet rewarding year, in Singapore and all over the world. There is perhaps no greater affirmation of hope than new life.



Baby Kyden Liow and family

## THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS, CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL NEW PARENTS

Our festive babies and all babies born at the hospital on New Year’s Day and during the Chinese New Year festive period received special gifts from our generous sponsors: Mums’ Club Singapore, Huggies Singapore, Pigeon Singapore, Beauty Mums & Babies, and Freshening Professional.

Congratulations to the Chan and Liow families, and to all families of babies born during this challenging yet rewarding year, in Singapore and all over the world. There is perhaps no greater affirmation of hope than new life.



## Short Takes

Singapore Health  
Quality Service  
Awards 2021



# Singapore Health Quality Service Awards 2021

Adopting the theme 'Celebration of Unity', this year's Singapore Health Quality Service Awards (SHQSA) recognised close to 7,000 healthcare professionals who have contributed significantly to the nation's fight against COVID-19.

### PROUD AND GRATEFUL

Organised by the SingHealth Duke-NUS Academic Medical Centre since 2011, the awards honour outstanding healthcare professionals who have delivered quality care and excellent service to patients. We are proud to share that Mount Alvernia Hospital has one 'SuperHero' and 34 'Heroes' among this year's winners.

### MEET OUR SUPERHERO

Mary Emelda Reddy, Senior Healthcare Assistant, St Dominic ward, has been working at Mount Alvernia Hospital for 24 years. Besides supporting the nursing team, she tirelessly helps and coaches our junior staff.

We are proud to share that Mount Alvernia Hospital has one 'SuperHero' and 34 'Heroes' among this year's winners.

When St Dominic ward was converted to an isolation ward to take in patients with fever, flu, respiratory symptoms or possible COVID-19 patients, Mary insisted that she remain with the team despite her age. Mary turns 67 this year.

While our foreign nurses have been unable to travel and visit their families, Mary has provided them with emotional support and comfort. She channels the courage and compassion of the FMDM Sisters and is a constant source of inspiration to her colleagues.

## Short Takes

Singapore Health Quality Service Awards 2021/  
COVID-19 Vaccination

### What Our Colleagues Say About Mary

"One unexpected aspect of COVID-19 outbreak was the opportunity to work with dedicated people who decided to join the newly created COVID-19 isolation facility in St Dominic ward. Mary decided to stay with her team and despite her age she continued to work with unwavering commitment. Her smile and her balanced attitude had a calming effect on patients and other members of the team. It has been a privilege to work with her during those trying times."

**Dr Piotr Chlebicki**, Infectious Disease Physician, Mount Alvernia Hospital

"Her smile and her balanced attitude had a calming effect on patients and other members of the team. It has been a privilege to work with her during those trying times."

*Dr Piotr Chlebicki*

"Mary is a very motherly person; she reminds all of us how to serve patients with care and empathy. Her kindness and commitment towards her patients and fellow colleagues are greatly appreciated. She is our Superhero indeed!"

**Ms Kathleen Low**, Deputy Director of Nursing, Mount Alvernia Hospital

"Mary is affectionately called 'Mother' by the rest of the team as she takes care of them like family. She also embraces change and adapted well to the transition from manual charting to electronic medical record."

**Ms See Bee Fong**, Nurse Manager, St Dominic Ward of Mount Alvernia Hospital

# COVID-19 Vaccination

After receiving their first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in January, our FMDM Sisters, leadership team, doctors and staff received their second dose in March.

### AFTER HEALTHCARE WORKERS, SENIORS

This second dose of the vaccine completes the full COVID-19 vaccination regime. It protects healthcare workers, who are at high risk of being infected, from becoming moderately to severely ill with the disease.

Meanwhile, vaccinations for seniors are being rolled out to seniors across the island. As more vaccine supplies become available, the Singapore Government will roll out the programme to cover the rest of Singapore's population.





## Short Takes

We're Getting Better All the Time



# We're Getting Better All the Time

When we recently embarked on an internal Quality Improvement Project throughout all departments, every member of our staff made a concerted effort and rose to the challenge. Here we share three outstanding improvements that arose from the project.

### SAFE ADMISSION OF 24-HR EMERGENCY SERVICES ISOLATION CASES

Our Business Office worked in close collaboration with our 24-Hr Emergency Services Department to minimise the shuttling back and forth between departments by patients and their next-of-kin whenever an outpatient was admitted to our hospital.

By devising a form that captured all necessary information, from personal particulars and insurance details to signatures of patients and their next-of-kin for admission and deposit collection, the number of trips was reduced from two or three to just a single trip. Overall, the duration of the admission process was halved from approximately 30 minutes to just 15.

Essentially, this innovation resulted in greater convenience for patients and their families, and enhanced staff and patient safety, especially in view of the COVID-19 situation. The paperwork, the footwork and the risks of infection were all significantly reduced.

All involved should be congratulated.

MOST IMPACTFUL IMPROVEMENT

### REACHING OUT TO PATIENTS DURING A PANDEMIC

Our Dietetics Department worked closely with our Technology & Strategy colleagues to ensure continuity of care for patients during last year's Circuit Breaker from April through June, when non-essential healthcare clinics were closed.

After researching various digital telecommunications platforms, our dietitians were able to successfully conduct consultations with patients at the majority of nursing homes under their care, as well as with pregnant mums at risk of gestational diabetes. Contactless payment was transacted via PayNow, thus streamlining accounting for the hospital.

By harnessing technology, patients were able to continue receiving professional advice on dietary matters at a time when general health was of utmost importance, without being exposed to undue risks through physical contact and without breaching health advisories.

That resourceful innovation is cause for celebration.

MOST INNOVATIVE IMPROVEMENT

### CLEARING SOILED MEAL TRAYS

Our Housekeeping Department took the initiative of changing the way meal trays were being collected from patients' rooms. Previously, meal trays were hand-carried out of patients' rooms, then cutlery and leftover food were cleared into separate compartments in the food trolleys that were parked in the wards' corridors. This took place in view of public and staff, potentially obstructing foot traffic, degrading air quality and generally creating a poor impression.

Now, the soiled meal trays are removed from the patients' rooms and placed directly into the food trolleys, leftover food and all. The subsequent sorting of leftover food and cutlery is done in the kitchen, rather than in full view of public and staff in the corridors.

This simple single improvement saved time, improved the navigability of the corridors, and lifted the image of the hospital.

Well done, Housekeeping.

MOST WASTE- AND COST-SAVING IMPROVEMENT



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Scan to find out more about the programmes!





## Blood Donation Drive

As part of our 60th Anniversary celebrations, Mount Alvernia Hospital held a Blood Donation Drive on Thursday, 1 April, the eve of Good Friday.

### ALL HANDS ON DECK

A total of 71 donors gave blood for this blood donation exercise. All hands were on deck, with clinical services, hospital operations, mission and corporate development staff on site to assist Red Cross and volunteers.

Mount Alvernia Hospital staff from other departments also volunteered to assist with administrative duties such as registration and issuing of certificates. Safe distancing officers were in attendance to ensure that safety measures were adhered to.

"I would like to thank the organising

**Thank you, Red Cross volunteers, staff and blood donors, for your contributions to this very worthy cause.**

committee for their support and assistance. Really heartened to see many first-time donors stepping forward to save lives,"

said Terrence Tan, Singapore Red Cross.

Thank you, Red Cross volunteers, staff and blood donors, for your contributions to this very worthy cause. The donation drive made Good Friday and Easter even more meaningful because it gave us the opportunity to do our part to give life to others.

*As 1 packet of blood helps to save up to 3 lives, we would have made an impact on an estimated 213 patients already!*



## A Commemorative Anniversary Gift

As part of the hospital's 60th Anniversary celebrations, every colleague was given a Mount Alvernia Hospital's reusable face mask as a commemorative gift. In a special ceremony, Father Peter Wee blessed the masks before their distribution.





# Celebrating 60 Years of Serving All with Love



Sixty years ago, on 4 March 1961, Mount Alvernia Hospital opened its doors with 60 beds, staffed entirely by the FMDM Sisters. Over the past six decades, we have seen our FMDM Sisters' legacy grow into a general hospital with 319 beds. Through the years, the tradition of providing compassionate and patient-centred care has continued, and the values on which the hospital was founded have never wavered.

Extraordinary times call for an extraordinary approach to celebrating our 60th Anniversary. In the midst of COVID-19, with the aid of technology, we brought the celebrations to colleagues, doctors, partners and friends across Singapore and around the world.

Here is how we are celebrating our virtual diamond jubilee event.



## OUR VIRTUAL EVENT

On 4 March 2021, close to 300 guests tuned in to our 2-hour 'live' 60th Anniversary virtual event. The virtual event was aired on our Facebook page and YouTube channel.

After a warm welcome and a trip down memory lane, during which the milestones of the hospital's eventful journey were recapped, a series of pre-recorded congratulatory messages were shared. The messages hailed from far and wide, and included greetings from the Archbishop of Singapore, Minister for Health, FMDM Congregation Leadership Team member, Chairperson of Catholic Health Care Asia, FMDM Sisters, our leadership team, doctors, community outreach partners and corporate partners. (See page 28 for selected highlights of messages from well-wishers.)

**“Together with all my colleagues and doctors, we will continue to grow our core values, so that we can write more wonderful chapters of our Mount Alvernia Hospital history.”**

*Dr James Lam Kian Ming, CEO*

In the course of the event, the audience was introduced to the second Mount Alvernia Outreach Dental Clinic in Enabling Village, located at Redhill, which is nearing completion. The new clinic will be wheelchair-friendly with wide open spaces, a low counter, sliding doors and a wheelchair tilter for dental works. The clinic is progressively being fitted out for our official opening in the next few months. Together with the first Mount Alvernia Outreach Dental Clinic in Toa Payoh, we will continue to serve vulnerable patients such as persons with disability, isolated seniors and underserved families.



The outreach clinics are an integral part of Mount Alvernia Hospital's community outreach initiatives, which collectively aim to provide disadvantaged sectors and members of the community with timely access to healthcare services.

A highlight of the event was the debut of an original song, 'The Alvernia Way'. The moving piece was especially composed, arranged, performed and recorded by colleagues and friends of the hospital to commemorate our 60th Anniversary. It sets the story of our hospital's heritage to music, paying tribute to how our staff have continued to live the values of our FMDM Sisters while embracing change and moving forward during these unprecedented times.



During the virtual event, we also welcomed our first 60th Anniversary baby – a lovely baby girl born 18 minutes after midnight. Our FMDM Sister, Sister Linda Sim, conducted a special blessing of this precious little one in the very ward in which her mother was being cared for. This was something of an exception to the norm, whereby baby blessings are conducted in the hospital's chapel on the day of discharge. (See a photo of this special little one, and find out about our social media contest, on page 21.)

## The Alvernia Way

CHORUS:

***We are Mount Alvernia  
Serving all with loving care  
Spreading hope, and joy we share  
Day after day,  
As our Sisters taught us  
We've served all sons and daughters  
With love and all who've sought us  
In the Alvernia Way***

***Picture our Sisters, all those years ago  
Tending to the sick all day, after which they'd go  
To build our mission hospital, with blood and sweat and tears  
With Blessings and devotion, it's stood these 60 years***

(CHORUS)

***Serving generations, with love and with a smile,  
We strive to do our best each day, and go the extra mile,  
A family for all families, we lend a listening ear  
To help in such occasions and minimise the fear***

(CHORUS)

***Looking ahead to the next sixty years,  
We'll never give up the quest  
To live the aims of our Franciscan roots  
And always to give of our best***

(CHORUS)

***We are Mount Alvernia!***

### The Alvernia Way

Music and lyrics: Alan Smith

Piano accompaniment: Yann Perron

Sound engineer: Jhon Leones

Choir members: Sister Linda Sim, Alan Smith, Joyce Ong, Judith Lee, Erica Lin, Ari Sutanto, Theresa Toh and Ang Xin Xuan



Fun, interactive roving quizzes kept the audience on their toes, and a second pre-recorded song, 'Make me a channel of your peace', was sung by the FMDM Sisters, colleagues and the Mount Alvernia Hospital choir.

### SERVING FOR THE LONGEST TIME

What would a celebration be without cake? To commemorate this very special day, special guests gathered around a cake that had been specially baked and decorated with the hospital's 60th Anniversary logo. They sang a spirited rendition of 'Happy Birthday' – only without the usual candle-blowing, of course, in view of COVID-19 protocol. The small gathering included two of our FMDM Sisters who are celebrating 60 years of service, four recipients of this year's Mount Alvernia Hospital long service awards, and

**“What our founding Sisters had was the courage and faith to respond to their vocation, and a calling to bring God's love and healing to all who are in need.”**

*Mr Ho Tian Yee, Chairman*

the Chairman and CEO of Mount Alvernia Hospital. (Read more about our long-serving FMDM Sisters on page 22, and our long-serving staff on page 24.)

Despite the lack of a physical gathering, the event felt intimate, sincere and joyous. Thanks to all who contributed their time, their ideas, their kind words, and their support.

Other 60th Anniversary events include our recent Blood Donation Drive and the upcoming opening of the second Mount Alvernia Outreach Dental Clinic at Enabling Village. Our second major fundraiser, the Mount Alvernia Hospital 60th Anniversary Walk, is scheduled to take place during the later part of this year.



A full 60 years after the hospital began its life, we continue to cherish the new lives that begin their journeys here – along with the lives of all those we serve at every stage of their journeys.

**BLANKETING ALL WITH LOVE**

To spread the joy of our special year, we are gifting every baby born at Mount Alvernia Hospital during 2021 with a limited-edition commemorative 60th Anniversary blanket.

A full 60 years after the hospital began its life, we continue to cherish the new lives that begin their journeys here – along with the lives of all those we serve at every stage of their journeys.

**A Year of Giving Thanks and Giving Back**

In addition to our virtual celebratory event, a full calendar of activities has been planned in the diamond jubilee year.

The first event of our 60th Anniversary year, named 'NIU' Year Blessings!, took place at the very beginning of the year. It exceeded its target of raising \$10,000, and brought some festive cheer to the lives of families in need. Red packets, were distributed to beneficiaries through our adopted charities: the Family Journey Programme by Care Corner, Project Family by Fei Yue, and Big Love by Montfort Care.

Our adopted charities:



Baby Ellerie Chew and family

# An Anniversary Gift, Delivered

Please join us in welcoming the first baby born at Mount Alvernia Hospital on our 60th Anniversary day, lovely little Ellerie Chew.

**WELCOME, ELLERIE**

Ellerie was born on 4 March 2021 at 12:18am to proud first-time parents, Chew Wee Jie and Irene Tan. This adorable little bundle of joy arrived a whole three weeks shy of her estimated due date.

"Ellerie came as a surprise to us. Though we were planning to have kids, we didn't expect to have her so soon," shared Irene. "Being a first-time parent, I was nervous as I had no clue what to expect. This transition to parenthood is definitely challenging for us, but at the same time, very rewarding. Ellerie is a blessed and lucky baby to be the first baby born on Mount Alvernia Hospital's 60th Anniversary!"

Mummy, Daddy and baby received special gifts from our sponsors along with Mount Alvernia Hospital's 60th Anniversary limited edition commemorative blanket.

We wish the Chew family many years of good health and joyous growing together – while growing ever closer together.

**"Ellerie is a blessed and lucky baby to be the first baby born on Mount Alvernia Hospital's 60th Anniversary!"**

*Irene Tan*

**60 GIFTS FOR 60 BABIES**

In addition to Ellerie, the next 59 babies born at Mount Alvernia Hospital will each receive a commemorative blanket and gifts from our generous sponsors.

We wish to thank the following respected brands for sponsoring our 60th Anniversary babies' gifts: Aviva, Beauty Mums & Babies, Freshening Professional, Huggies Singapore, Keenz Wagon Stroller Singapore, Mead Johnson Nutrition, Mommy's Bae, Pigeon Singapore, SuperMommy and Yago Services.



Mum Irene Tan and Baby Ellerie Chew, with Sister Linda Sim, and Ms Shirley Tay, Director of Nursing

## Capture Your Baby's Growing Moment **WIN** a Personalised Keepsake Blanket

If you received a 60th Anniversary limited edition commemorative blanket when you delivered your baby at Mount Alvernia Hospital, we invite you to enter our social media contest.

**To enter:**

Place your baby on their 60th Anniversary blanket and include an indicator of baby's age (in months). Snap and share the photo on your social media with hashtags #MountAlverniaHospital #AlverniaBabies #Mommysbae.

The three posts with the most likes will each WIN a personalised toddler blanket to celebrate the precious first year of growth.

Winners will be notified via Instagram and Facebook.





# Celebrating Their Diamond Jubilee

In the same year that we are celebrating the hospital's 60th Anniversary, we also celebrate the diamond jubilee of two of our FMDM sisters, Sister Bernadette and Sister Florence. We salute them for 60 years of religious life in mission.

## SISTER BERNADETTE

Sister Bernadette has dedicated her life to healthcare and served generations of patients since 1966 through the FMDM. In recognition of her life-long service and dedication to patient care, she received the Healthcare Humanity Awards Honourable Mention Medallion from Former President Tony Tan Keng Yam in 2015. The award recognises healthcare workers who have inspired the public with their exemplary compassion and commitment to deliver quality care with empathy for their patients.

One of the first few local Sisters who joined Mount Alvernia Hospital after it was opened in 1961, Sister Bernadette was trained and worked as a nurse and midwife before

**“My work is a great source of joy and enrichment for myself personally. I hope to be able to enjoy this special privilege for as long as I can.”**

*Sister Bernadette*

undergoing training to work as a Clinical Pastoral Care counsellor in the 1980s. Prior to joining Mount Alvernia Hospital, she worked as a nurse at the old Mandalay Road Hospital isolation ward for tuberculosis patients in 1957. Over the decades, she has touched many lives through the love and compassion she has shown to patients and their relatives.

“My work is a great source of joy and enrichment for myself personally. I hope to be able to enjoy this special privilege for as long as I can,” said Sister Bernadette.

Sister Bernadette pioneered Clinical Pastoral Care in 1985 at Mount Alvernia Hospital.

## SISTER FLORENCE

Trained as a nurse and midwife, Sister Florence served Mount Alvernia Hospital for many years and managed the hospital from 1980 to 1983 as the Hospital Administrator. By that time, there were already more than 200 beds in the hospital. In addition to assisting in numerous surgeries and nursing hundreds of patients, she has been active in fundraising work for needy patients at both Assisi Hospice and Mount Alvernia Hospital.

Sister Florence has seen the hospital move and expand with the times, and has always been a champion of change. While she cherishes the constant values of the FMDM Sisters, she welcomes modernisation and upgrading.

Today, she looks forward to the completion of the new mothers and children's block.

“Part of our charism is the conceiving,

**“May you continue to uphold the FMDM charism, which encourages us to seek to imitate Mary in her unique role as Mother of God – to conceive, give birth to, and nurture the life of Christ – which is a life of love – in our hearts, our communities and in our world today.”**

*Sister Florence*

birthing and nurturing of life. Therefore the new block is very relevant to our mission,” said Sister Florence.

On the occasion of Mount Alvernia Hospital's 60th Anniversary, Sister Florence has this message for the extended family of the hospital's religious and lay staff, and volunteers:

“May you continue to uphold the FMDM charism, which encourages us to seek to imitate Mary in her unique role as Mother of God – to conceive, give birth to, and nurture the life of Christ – which is a life of love – in our hearts, our communities and in our world today.”



# Congratulations to Our Long Service Award Recipients

We recognised and celebrated the contributions and loyalty of staff who have served at the hospital for periods ranging from five to 50 years. We chatted with some of our longest-serving colleagues during our virtual anniversary event

## LIVING OUT THE VALUES OF THE FMDM SISTERS

Our Long Service Award recipients continue to live out the values of the FMDM Sisters as they work with passion and an unshakeable commitment to nurturing life, bringing joy and serving all with love.

Ms Ang Gek, Nurse Manager, Delivery Suite, who has been with the hospital for 35 years, singled out the FMDM Sisters as her source of inspiration.

“The FMDM Sisters brought with them a sense of warmth and belonging that the hospital has continued to embody over the years. They are my role models for caring and serving all with love,” said Ms Ang.



Ms Ang Gek, Nurse Manager, Delivery Suite, receiving her Long Service Award for 35 years of service

Mr Koh Nyuk Choon, Technician in Facilities Management, has clocked up a full 45 years of service with the hospital. He echoed Ms Ang's sentiments when he said, “I admire and appreciate the hospital's Christian mission and its compassionate, forgiving culture.”



Mr Koh Nyuk Choon, Technician in Facilities Management, receiving his Long Service Award for 45 years of service



Ms Ng Lih Wang, Principal Physiotherapist, Rehabilitation Centre, receiving her Long Service Award for 15 years of service

Ms Ng Lih Wang, Principal Physiotherapist in the Rehabilitation Centre, who has been with the hospital for 15 years, said, “I like the values embedded in the working culture at Mount Alvernia Hospital – we serve all with love. I am also drawn to the unique history of Mount Alvernia Hospital, to which the FMDM Sisters have selflessly given their time and in fact their whole lives.”



Ms Margaret Mary Paul, Patient Service Assistant, Business Office, receiving her Long Service Award for 40 years of service

Ms Margaret Mary Paul, Patient Service Assistant in the Business Office, has been with us for 40 years. Explaining her gratitude and dedication to the hospital, she said, “As a Catholic, Mount Alvernia Hospital is my employer of choice. My strong affinity with the hospital's vision, values and ethos has enabled me to find purpose and joy in my work.”

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR LONG-SERVING STAFF

Margaret spoke for all of her colleagues when she penned this message for the hospital on the occasion of its 60th Anniversary:

“A big THANK YOU to all the FMDM Sisters who started the good work at Mount Alvernia Hospital. It is my wish that the beauty and legacy of their love will continue to flourish as we expand and embark on new chapters of our history.”



# The Honours Roll

## 50 YEARS

Tan Lim Siok, Food & Beverages ★ Khng Mui Tien, Housekeeping ★ Ng Chek Gin, Housekeeping

## 45 YEARS

Nalini Govindan, Day Ward ★ A Vasantha Kumari, Delivery Suite ★ Koh Nyuk Choon, Facilities Management

## 40 YEARS

Margaret Mary Paul, Business Office ★ Jumiah Binte Yunani, Our Lady Ward ★ Vasegee Arumugam, St Francis Ward ★ Pereira Gloria, St Francis Ward ★ Ho Mei Leng, St Michael Ward ★ D Leela Bernardine, St Raphael Ward

## 35 YEARS

Ang Gek, Delivery Suite ★ Francis Mary Madeline, St Gabriel Ward ★ A. Jenyanthy V. Annasalam, St Raphael Ward

## 30 YEARS

Karupathevan S/O R, Facilities Management ★ Teo Siew Eng, Food & Beverages ★ Aishah Binti Muhammad, St Gabriel Ward ★ Tamilselvi D/O Vaithilingam, St Joseph Ward

## 25 YEARS

Kamala Davi A/P Kathir Gamer, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Koh Sai Moo, Corporate Development ★ Bernadette Rajoo, Front Office ★ Sulaiman Bin Ahmat, Housekeeping ★ Si Lian Kiang, St Michael Ward

## 20 YEARS

Ho Li Chin, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Oh Lay Khim, Business Office ★ Ruhana Bte Ahmad, Delivery Suite ★ Hamimah Bte Haji Dollah, Food & Beverages ★ Goh Sze Ling Rosalind, Intensive Care Unit ★ Mageswari A/P Rajoo, Nursing Administration ★ Chok Shuk Kyun Beverley, Rehabilitation Centre ★ Chinnasamy Latchemenan, Security ★ Glenda Lor Cabansay, St Michael Ward

## 15 YEARS

Lee Beng Sim Frances, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Ng You Ting, Business Office ★ Duanmu Chuanfang, Day Ward ★ Elizabeth Fabiana Macapayag, Diagnostic Imaging ★ Ng Lih Wing, Rehabilitation Centre ★ Neo Yan Fen, St Joseph Ward

## 10 YEARS

Sumathy D/O Arumugam Pillai, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Lim Hui Gee, Business Office ★ Lim Yew Song William, Clinical Pastoral Care ★ Ari Wulandari Sutanto, Corporate Development ★ Carmela Dawn Lalong Isip Cueto, Day Ward ★ Chidie Canon Verginisa, Delivery Suite ★ Chee Siew Lin, Finance ★ Aw Liang Hsiung, Food & Beverages ★ Grace D/O Yessudas, Front Office ★ Chee Chai Ling, Housekeeping ★ Sunga Richard Villanueva, Intensive Care Unit ★ Foong Chee Kei, Materials Management ★ Leow Bee Tian, Parentcraft ★ Chui Jinq Fong, Pharmacy ★ Ng Gek Neo Alice, Rehabilitation Centre ★ Mohamed Rozali Bin Abdul Rahim, Security ★ Sharom Bin Mohammad, Security ★ Jason John Chavez Araboy, Technology & Strategy ★ Sandoval Danielle Rose Tio, St Clare Ward ★ Despabeladera Marilou Loyola, St Dominic Ward ★ De Guia Maria Janice Cabadin, St Joseph Ward ★ Shasi Priya D/O Ravi, St Joseph Ward

## 5 YEARS

Francis Sylvia Shanti, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Marlar Tin Aye, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Ehlilarrasi Tamilselvan, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Dandan Edmyralyn Gaspar, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Vinothini Selvanderan, 24-Hr Clinic & Emergency Services ★ Siti Salbiah Binte Omar, Business Office ★ Liaw Yue Ting, Business Office ★ Soon Hao Shien Dickson, Business Office ★ Gan Siew Lee, Business Office ★ Ely Aqilah Binte Mohamed Nasir, Cardio-Vascular Laboratory ★ Punggothei Subramaniam, Central Sterile Services ★ De Souza Jeffrey Peter, Central Sterile Services ★ Elizabeth Moey Kar Lee, Clinical Pastoral Care ★ Megala D/O Arinathan, Clinical Quality & Informatics ★ Yeo Joo Lee Jillian, Clinical Support Administration ★

Ganesh Bahadur Khadka, Coffee House ★ Low Kar Yin, Corporate Development ★ Chan Wai Yee, Day Ward ★ Rani Koodathummuriyil Varughese, Day Ward ★ Lim Lee Cheng, Delivery Suite ★ Toh Qi Xian Terence, Diagnostic Imaging ★ Ho Fui Tze, Diagnostic Imaging ★ Tan Chor Gek, Diagnostic Imaging ★ Lee Yoke Fong, Diagnostic Imaging ★ Dampil Jennelyn Villanueva, Diagnostic Imaging ★ Sinaram Sarah Shamila, Dietetics ★ Natarajan S/O Doraisamy, Facilities Management ★ Tay Lee Wah, Finance ★ Chong Yoke Peng Millie, Finance ★ Chong Ka Shem, Food & Beverages ★ Pathmapriya Perumal, Front Office ★ Rubah Govindasamy, Housekeeping ★ Uylengco Arlene Aranzanso, Intensive Care Unit ★ Yeong Chee Leong, Laboratory ★ Seah Juncheng, Laboratory ★ Yogis D/O Subramaniam, Laboratory ★ Leu Qian Yi Jasmine, Laboratory ★ Chan Chien Liek Caroline, Laboratory ★ Lim Sok Fong, Laboratory ★ Tan Siew Lan, Laboratory ★ Nadesan Rageindran, Laboratory ★ Yam Mei Ying, Medical Affairs ★ Ong Swee Bee Joyce, Mission ★ Low Phui Toh Kathleen, Nursing Administration ★ Chan Wei Jie Timothy William, Operating Theatre ★ Baldove Jezelmar Arellano, Operating Theatre ★ Saing Ja Maing, Operating Theatre ★ Aaron Gerard, Operating Theatre ★ Alim Bin Hamzan, Operating Theatre ★ Muhammad Ihsan Bin Abu Rahim, Operating Theatre ★ Dimaano Dina Gegajo, Operating Theatre ★ Lim Sem Choo, Parentcraft ★ Misalang Mercedes Gundayao, Pharmacy ★ Sultan Ali Shahul Hameed, Pharmacy ★ Harvy Anne Tanglao Makabali, Pharmacy ★ Tan Yuan Teng, Pharmacy ★ Koh Zexuan, Pharmacy ★ Busari Bin Tarjoh, Security ★ Ocampo Editha Quilantic, Our Lady Ward ★ Yin Nyein Thu, Our Lady Ward ★ Zhu Jing, St Clare Ward ★ Roshazmira Binte Fhaidil, St Clare Ward ★ Mon Myat Zin, St Dominic Ward ★ See Chia Wen, St Dominic Ward ★ Tijimol Lukose, St Dominic Ward ★ Geder Lea Tomboc, St Dominic Ward ★ Loria Dorothy Paz Quinon, St Dominic Ward ★ Gayatri D/O Amrathalingam, St Dominic Ward ★ Lian Bee Leng, St Francis Ward ★ Suganya D/O P Gunasager, St Francis Ward ★ Chet Kae Shuang, St Francis Ward ★ Su Jianping, St Francis Ward ★ Chua Li Lian, St Gabriel Ward ★ Teh Hui Hui, St Gabriel Ward ★ Morales Abigel Celmar, St Gabriel Ward ★ Rubiales Valerie Cacayan, St Joseph Ward ★ Mary Thangam D/O Bazi, St Michael Ward ★ Dela Cruz Ma Dominica Layug, St Michael Ward ★ Eng Lee Lan, St Michael Ward



# Kind Words

Thank you to all who wished us well on our 60th Anniversary. Here we share some of the heart-warming messages we received and aired during our 60th Anniversary live virtual event.



In the gospel, we are told that Christ came to bear our infirmities on His body. He came to heal and to liberate humanity from diseases and to set them free. I thank the FMDM Sisters of Mount Alvernia Hospital, especially the pioneers who have gone before us and left us with the great legacy of continuing their mission of healing and giving life to the sick, and comforting those who are suffering. To the Board, the staff and collaborators of Mount Alvernia Hospital, thank you for

**May God make you all fruitful in your ministry of healing. Congratulations on your 60th Anniversary of medical and pastoral care. God bless you all.**

seeking to rediscover the ideals of a true Catholic hospital – showing the face of Jesus to all, regardless of race, language or religion. May God make you all fruitful in your ministry of healing. Congratulations on your 60th Anniversary of medical and pastoral care. God bless you all.

**Most Reverend William Goh**  
*Archbishop of Singapore*



It is my pleasure to join you, albeit virtually, at Mount Alvernia Hospital's 60th Anniversary celebrations. Mount Alvernia Hospital was built in 1961, as Singapore's first not-for-profit private hospital, providing maternity and paediatric and services. Today the hospital also offers medical and surgical services, and is setting up its new maternity and paediatric centre and integrated oncology services centre, to meet the needs of the community. I would like to thank Mount Alvernia Hospital for partnering the Ministry of Health in various national healthcare initiatives. Take the COVID-19 pandemic, for example. At the peak of the outbreak in Singapore last year, Mount Alvernia Hospital received and cared for recovering COVID-19 patients, as well

**I would like to thank Mount Alvernia Hospital for partnering the Ministry of Health in various national healthcare initiatives.**

as patients with non-COVID-19 conditions transferred from public hospitals. This helped our public hospitals to continue caring for all patients, COVID-19 or otherwise. Prior to

the pandemic, Mount Alvernia Hospital also supported the Health Promotion Board's National Colo-rectal Cancer Screening Programme, from 2018 to 2020, by providing subsidised colonoscopy services... To everyone at Mount Alvernia Hospital who has partnered and collaborated with us, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you. Keep up the good work, and continue to touch the hearts of the patients you serve. Once again, Happy 60th Anniversary.

**Mr Gan Kim Yong**  
*Minister for Health*





It has been 60 years since our FMDM Sisters founded the Mount Alvernia Hospital. What started out as a small mothers' and children's hospital has evolved into a full-fledged general hospital. Over the next two years, we will continue to grow, adding a new mother and child block and a new integrated cancer centre. But more important than the physical expansion of facilities and capabilities, these platforms will provide us with more

**Over the next two years, we will continue to grow, adding a new mother and child block and a new integrated cancer centre.**

opportunities to touch lives, and to serve more with love. I am very blessed to be part of the Mount Alvernia Hospital family, and I hope that together with all my colleagues and doctors, we will continue to grow our core values of Compassion, Humility, Integrity, Respect and Peace, so that we can write more wonderful chapters of our Mount Alvernia Hospital history. Happy 60th Anniversary!

**Dr James Lam Kian Ming**  
CEO, Mount Alvernia Hospital



As we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Mount Alvernia Hospital, we look back on 2020 and marvel at the challenges that we all had to overcome... As bleak as things may look, I wonder what this interview would be like if we had done this interview in 1949 with the founding Sisters. They had just arrived on a foreign shore, to an unknown reception, with limited resources. Yet what they had was the courage and faith to respond to their vocation, and a calling to bring God's love and healing to all who are in need. They started to serve those whom society had shunned, first with the patients at Mandalay

**Today, the stage may have changed, the healthcare services may have evolved, but it still requires the same courage and the same faith to respond to the calling.**

Road, and then at Woodbridge, and the rest is history. Today, the stage may have changed, the healthcare services may have evolved, but it still requires the same courage and the same faith to respond to the calling. With that, I would like to wish you all a Happy 60th Anniversary.

**Mr Ho Tian Yee**  
Chairman, Mount Alvernia Hospital





Executive Team of Mount Alvernia Hospital

While we look back over the past 60 years of Mount Alvernia Hospital – we have responded to the call of duty and embraced changes within the complexities of healthcare.

**Dr James Lam Kian Ming**  
CEO

Healthcare, which is always evolving and transforming to meet changing needs and the environment, but our values remain constant.

**Mrs Annie Lim**  
Director, Finance

As a Catholic hospital, we grow our FMDM Mission of bringing healing and hope to each and every patient who enters our doors.

**Mr Bruce Leong**  
Director, Technology & Strategy

We continuously ‘Serve All with Love’ and reach out to those who fall through the safety net of healthcare provision in the community.

**Ms Shirley Tay**  
Director, Nursing

I am proud to be part of this legacy and how we, as one Mount Alvernia Hospital family constantly go the extra mile to help one another, patients and their families, and the underserved in the community.

**Dr Djon Huang**  
Director of Clinical Services

The wisdom and courage of our founding FMDM Sisters inspire us, daily, encouraging us to live out our values in our work – to provide holistic healthcare; raising quality of care and support for people.

**Ms Karen Poon**  
Director, Mission

I am happy to say that we have lived out our fundamental values of Compassion, Humility, Integrity, Respect and Peace throughout the years.

**Mr Goh Hock Soon**  
Director, Corporate Development

It is also a joy to see what our FMDM Sisters began more than six decades ago being grown, deepened and strengthened.

**Ms Cindy Ong**  
Director, Human Resources

And how every colleague has a role to play in these testing times – your dedication and commitment enable us to emerge stronger and more resilient.

**Mr Gus Teoh**  
Director, Hospital Operations

Together, let us continue to write more beautiful chapters of Mount Alvernia Hospital’s legacy – 60 years and beyond.

**Dr James Lam Kian Ming**  
CEO

**Thank you everyone  
for making Mount Alvernia  
Hospital special.**



On behalf of all FMDM Sisters around the world, in England, Scotland, Island, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Rome, Jerusalem and Malaysia, we really congratulate you on this wonderful occasion, a day of great thanksgiving and many blessings. I sometimes wonder what was in the minds of our three pioneering Sisters – Angela, Camillus and Baptista, as they set out on their missionary journey that eventually led them to Singapore in 1949, they were posted to Tan Tock Seng Hospital to care for people living with tuberculosis, and to Trafalgar House, to care for people living with leprosy. Their mission was simple – to share in the healing ministry of Jesus, bringing hope and restoring dignity. Little did they know their simple beginnings would contribute valuably to nursing in Singapore... May the competency and compassion of the early Sisters remain the hallmark of Mount Alvernia Hospital. May the missionary zeal and enthusiasm of our early Sisters who have gone before us be the heartbeat of your many encounters as you continue to reach out and serve all with love. Congratulations, and may this diamond jubilee year be filled with blessings of hope and peace for all.

**Sister Helena McEvilly**  
FMDM Congregation Leadership Team Member

**“May the competency and compassion of the early Sisters remain the hallmark of Mount Alvernia Hospital. May the missionary zeal and enthusiasm of our early Sisters who have gone before us be the heartbeat of your many encounters as you continue to reach out and serve all with love.”**

Sister Helena McEvilly



As I look back, it is with much gratitude to God for His guidance and protection for the various developments and projects through the years, and for all who have journeyed with us over the years – the doctors, dedicated staff and their families. March the 4th, 1961 was also a very special day and year for me, as I set sail on my religious journey, leaving Singapore for the first time away from my family as a young postulant to join our international noviciate in Ladywell, England. I have seen, experienced the transformation of Mount Alvernia Hospital and grown with the hospital over the years. I feel so richly blessed to know, in the words of Saint Francis himself – we have done what was ours to do... Happy Diamond Jubilee, Mount Alvernia Hospital!

**Sister Eucharis Tan**  
FMDM



On behalf of all our FMDM Sisters, I take this opportunity to pay tribute and express heartfelt gratitude to each and every one who in way or another contributed to the Mount Alvernia Hospital of today. Praise and thanks be to God. Thank you to our Board of Directors, management and staff, doctors, mission partners. I am sure that our pioneer FMDM Sisters are celebrating with us in spirit.

**Sister Linda Sim**  
FMDM





We affirm your unique role in healthcare and your reputation as a beacon of mercy and compassion. Your emphasis on maternal and child health truly witnesses to your FMDM legacy, and gives flesh to the Divine Motherhood. May God bless your efforts, may your new endeavours continue to bear fruit, and we wish you a wonderful anniversary celebration and commemoration.

**Ms Wendy M Lewis**  
*Chairperson, Catholic Health Care Asia*



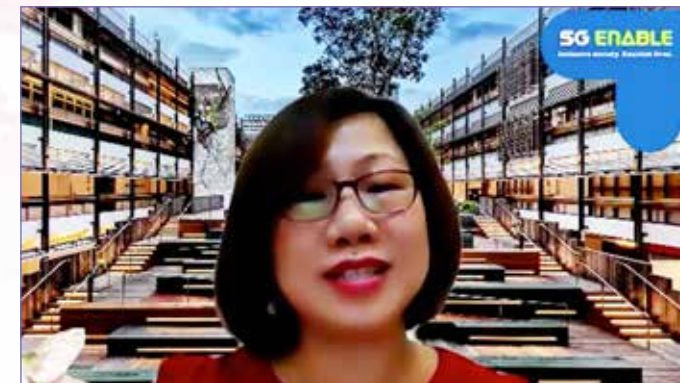
For 60 years, Mount Alvernia Hospital has been providing health services for all who need them, with compassion and kindness, in accordance with the values of Saint Francis of Assisi. From its humble beginnings, it has developed into an iconic hospital in Singapore, well-known, loved and respected by all. Carry on your excellent work. Congratulations and Happy 60th Anniversary.

**Mr Phillip Tan**  
*Chairman, Community Chest*



Mount Alvernia Hospital Outreach Office has set up a medical and dental clinic in Agape Village, and we are so proud to say that the community has been enriched by these services in the Toa Payoh area... This year is the Catholic 200 SG celebration, and we are really, really proud that Mount Alvernia Hospital can showcase the great work you have done in the last 60 years. So once again, Happy 60th Anniversary from all of us at Caritas Singapore.

**Ms Christine Wong**  
*Executive Director, Caritas Singapore*



The Mount Alvernia Hospital Outreach Medical Clinic at Enabling Village was the first of its kind in Singapore to deliver subsidised primary healthcare to underserved communities, including persons with disabilities. You have touched many lives. With the new medical and dental clinic opening at Enabling Village, we wish you many more years of success on your inclusive journey with us. On behalf of all of us at SG Enable, Happy Birthday, Mount Alvernia Hospital.

**Ms Ku Geok Boon**  
*CEO, SG Enable*



It is truly a blessing to share a similar mission of providing compassionate, excellent and holistic healthcare, and to be part of this prestigious phase, 15 years on and counting. We at Eagle Eye Centre look forward to continuing our partnership with Mount Alvernia Hospital, and wish the hospital more blessings and success in the years to come.

**Dr Julian Theng**  
*Founder and Ophthalmologist, Eagle Eye Centre*



Mount Alvernia Hospital is not just a hospital building. It is a place, a home actually, where doctors, nurses and also patients have all grown over the years, together as a family – and not just any ordinary family, but a family which understands the core values of Compassion, Humility, Integrity, Respect and Peace. Thank you, Mount Alvernia Hospital, for allowing me to be part of this family, and watch you grow over the past 15 years. Congratulations on your 60th birthday.

**Dr Lim Kwang Hsien**  
*Paediatric Medicine, Kinder Clinic*



Mount Alvernia Hospital is not only a pillar of support, care and comfort to those who turn to you in times of need, but through your active involvement in social impact programmes, you have also touched the lives of countless more. Well done, and keep doing the good work. The PRUPanel Connect team at Prudential is honoured and proud to partner Mount Alvernia Hospital for making quality healthcare accessible for our policyholders, and we really look further to further enhancing our partnership.

**Dr Sidharth Kachroo**  
*Medical Director, Prudential Singapore*



Happy 60th Birthday, Mount Alvernia Hospital. A big congratulations to the FMDM Sisters, Dr James Lam and the team at Mount Alvernia Hospital for reaching this significant milestone of providing 60 years of service with love to Singaporeans. Icon is proud to partner with you in the next phase of your journey, and delivering on our joint promise to provide exceptional healthcare on your campus. Congratulations!

**Ms Serena Wee**  
*CEO, Icon Cancer Centre*





Happy Birthday – congratulations on turning 60 this year. Thank you very much for the good partnership for the past 20 years. I wish the hospital many good years ahead.

**Dr Jane Yap**  
*Respiratory Medicine, Jane Yap Chest & Medical Clinic*



We are the ACJ Group, and we've been here for two and a half years. We are very happy here, and we thank you for having us. We feel very privileged to be part of the team, taking care of patients and showing them God's love in the way that we minister and take care of their sicknesses... Happy Birthday, Mount Alvernia Hospital!

**Dr Adrian Tan, Dr Candice Wang, Dr Caroline Khi and Dr Joycelyn Wong**  
*Obstetrics & Gynaecology, ACJ Women's Clinic*



From all of us at FrieslandCampina, a very Happy 60th Anniversary, Mount Alvernia Hospital. You are truly a hospital that leads and nourishes with the heart and I have no doubt that with the great principles that you adhere to, the next 60 years will be fantastic. We thank you for a long partnership, and look forward to a great future with you.

**Mr David Naidu**  
*Managing Director, FrieslandCampina*



Happy 60th Anniversary and congratulations on making such a significant milestone. From all of us at Nestlé, we wish you many more successful years ahead.

**Ms Kimberley Oh**  
*Business Manager, Nestlé Nutrition Singapore*



I would like to give my heartiest congratulations to Mount Alvernia Hospital for achieving its milestone 60th birthday anniversary. KKH Dental Services has been very glad to partner with Mount Alvernia Hospital and we remain committed to increasing the accessibility of dental care services to the community through our dental outreach clinics. Happy Birthday!

**Dr Chay Pui Ling**  
*Head and Consultant, Dental Service, KK Women's and Children's Hospital*



Congratulations... You've come a long way since you started in 1961... Likewise at Aviva, we have a long history in Singapore. We've been here, formerly known as ICS, Insurance Corporation of Singapore. We have over a million customers, and we have formidable partnerships, of which one of them is our partnership with you. Hope we can take this partnership in providing both financial and health services to all Singaporeans and their loved ones and give a holistic offering to Singaporeans.

**Mr Pavan Virmani**  
*Chief Alternate Distribution Officer, Aviva*



Here at Mead Johnson, we really thank you for your many years of wonderful support and partnership. We wish you many good years ahead. Happy Anniversary, Mount Alvernia Hospital!

**Mr Clement Ng**  
*Head of Medical Services, Mead Johnson Nutrition*



***We pay tribute to the FMDM Sisters and the hospital staff who have continued to serve all with love.***



**Dr Ong Eng Keow**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Sister Elizabeth Lim**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Dr Ho Kheng Thye**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Mr Tham Sai Choy**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Mr Paul Beh Jit Han**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Mr Eddie Chau**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Ms Chan Chia Lin**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Dr Kwa Chong Teck**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital, **Ms Tan Su May**, Board Member, Mount Alvernia Hospital.

***We are proud to be part of the FMDM family together with you. May you continue to uphold the mission and provide the compassionate love to all you serve.***



**Ms Anita Fam**, Chairman, Assisi Hospice, **Ms Choo Shiu Ling**, CEO, Assisi Hospice, **Ms Joan Lim-Choong**, CEO, Mount Miriam Cancer Hospital, Penang.

***Congratulations, Mount Alvernia Hospital, and thank you for your support and partnership over all these years.***



**Dr Ching Kwok Choy**, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, KC Ching Clinic, **Dr Goh Shen Li**, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, S L Goh Women's Clinic, **Dr Ho Hon Kwok**, H K Ho Women & Fertility Clinic, **Ms Agnes Chia**, Chief Service Officer, Care Corner Singapore, **Mr Desmond Lim**, Director, Big Love, **Ms Evelyn Chye**, Social Worker, Fei Yue Community Services, **Ms Gina Lim**, Founder and Managing Director, Lady's Raffles International, **Mr Yusuke Nakata**, Chairman, Pigeon Singapore, **Ms Hoo Kah Yan**, Brand Manager (Huggies), Kimberley-Clark Singapore, **Ms Joan Ong**, CEO, WeLoveSupermom, **Ms Sherilyn Quek**, Freshening Industries.



# Look How Far We've Come Together

As we look back on the eventful 60-year journey of Mount Alvernia Hospital, we look forward to a meaningful future of serving all with love.



1961

On 4 March, Mount Alvernia Hospital opens as a 60-bed hospital entirely staffed by the FMDM Sisters, who are trained nurses. The first baby is delivered at the hospital on 12 March 1961.



1965

Mr Lee Kuan Yew officially opens a new five-storey wing, which brings the total number of hospital beds to 127.



1971

By 1971, three extensions of the building have been added, all officially opened by Mr Lee Kuan Yew.



1985

The Clinical Pastoral Care Department is established as part of holistic care to support patients and their relatives.



1996 – 1997

Medical Centre A opens, adding medical suites, operating theatres, delivery suites, an endoscopy centre and rehabilitation centre to the hospital.

More medical suites are added with the completion of Medical Centre B.

The total number of hospital beds is now 303.



2004

The Day Surgery Centre and the 24-hour Walk-in Clinic and Emergency Services open and begin serving the public.



2009 – 2010

A hospital-wide community outreach programme is officially launched to bring health screening services to the underserved communities. Alvernia Parentcraft Centre is launched as a dedicated one-stop centre for antenatal care, childbirth education and newborn baby care.



2019

We become the first private hospital to partner Community Chest to raise awareness and rally support for the Rare Disease Fund.

We announce our partnership with Icon Cancer Centre to build a new integrated cancer facility at the hospital premises, offering services like haematology and radiation oncology.

Our new partnership with Prudential allows patients to enjoy the convenience of cashless medical service.

A new wing is added to St Francis Ward with two sets of two-bedders and four-bedders, bringing our bed count to 319.

We begin construction of a new maternity and paediatrics centre. The centre will be ready in 2022.



2019 ← 2018

Our Alvernia Endoscopy Centre is redesigned as a one-stop service facility with a minor operating theatre so that patients can undergo colonoscopy and follow up with other minor surgeries within the same premises.

Our electronic medical records system, christened HealthAngel, goes 'live'. HealthAngel will enhance hospital operations and integrate into the national healthcare network.



2020

All hands are on deck to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.



2017 ← 2016

Our Laboratory Services are redeveloped and expanded to provide increased capabilities and procedures based on the most contemporary medical laboratory methodologies and systems.

Our second outreach clinic, comprising medical and dental services, opens at Agape Village in Toa Payoh.

We successfully transit from ISO 2008 standards to ISO 2015 standards hospital-wide.

2015

St Dominic medical and surgical wards and St Michael maternity wards open, providing additional bed capacity to reduce waiting time, and accommodate increased inpatient admissions.

We officially open our first outreach medical clinic at the Enabling Village located at Redhill, providing healthcare services to people with disabilities and the underserved in the community.



2014

Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health and Archbishop William Goh, officially opens Medical Centre D. The number of on-campus specialist clinics is now 89.

2013

Emeritus Archbishop Nicholas Chia officially opens our newly renovated Chapel.

We become the first hospital in Singapore to expand our magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services for prostate, breast and magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) with the new 3 Tesla MRI digital scanner with Ambient Experience.



2011

The Mammography Screening Centre is launched. Our first overseas office, Mount Alvernia Hospital Information Centre (MAHIC), officially opens in Jakarta on 6 May.



Serving all with Love

2021

We celebrate our 60th Anniversary.





Community Outreach activities from 2009 – 2019

# Community Outreach Through the Years



Though the hospital-wide Community Outreach programme officially began in 2009, it channels the spirit of loving service that has been touching the lives of local communities since the hospital began.

## REACHING OUT AND GIVING BACK

To be of service to our community, we actively engage in outreach activities to bring care directly to those in need while building on our long history of caring for the underprivileged.

A little known fact is that Assisi Hospice's story began in Mount Alvernia Hospital, when it was a new wing that the FMDM sisters had built for chronically ill patients, most of whom were in financial need. The hospice, now an independent institution, has expanded to serve patients who are suffering and in need of palliative care, regardless of their condition.

Over the years, we have constantly served and reached out to the Singapore community, focusing on those who may otherwise fall through the safety net of healthcare provision in our community.

Our hospital-wide Community Outreach programme has reached out to more than 15,000 people through mass health screenings and health talks conducted at

grassroots level through partnerships with non-profit organisations, churches and other religious organisations, both locally and overseas.

## CHANGING NEEDS, NEW SERVICES

In the course of conducting health screenings, one of our community outreach initiatives, it became apparent that many of the patients we saw needed ongoing assistance to ensure continuity of care. Hence we embarked on a new initiative to provide highly subsidised primary healthcare services for the needy and vulnerable members of our community who had fallen through the gaps of society's safety net. In 2014, we started preparations to open our first outreach clinic.

After our first outreach medical clinic opened in 2015, dental services and a number of mobile healthcare services were added in 2016.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Just as Mount Alvernia Hospital is expanding and adapting to the changing healthcare

needs of Singaporeans, we too strive to keep our services in step with the changing healthcare landscape.

With the pro bono support of consultants from Bain & Co, a study was done in 2020 to identify future healthcare needs and the people most likely to need our helping hands. Consequently, we are in the process of crafting programmes that cater to the current and future needs of the underserved members of our community.

## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY...

In addition to our passionate Community Outreach staff and one locum coordinator, numerous colleagues from all departments of the hospital regularly give their time, effort and expertise to volunteer at our outreach events. They also recruit fellow volunteers, assist with hospital-based outreach cases, and support our outreach clinics in various ways such as providing flu vaccinations, health screening activities, and dental services.



Outreach activities in the community 2018

We also rely on the services of a core group of doctors, nurses and allied health professional volunteers both on-campus and off-campus, who assist us with our mobile outreach events and provide ad hoc pro bono consultations for every referred outreach cases. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also enjoyed the invaluable assistance of a rotating pool of medical students from Duke-NUS Medical School and the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

We deeply appreciate and sincerely thank our volunteers who have joined us in serving the community and making a meaningful impact on so many lives.

## NAVIGATING OBSTACLES

Not surprisingly, COVID-19 has disrupted and temporarily halted many of our community outreach activities. For example, our regular mobile clinics with TWC2 in Little India and at foreign workers' dormitories were suspended at the start of the pandemic. Likewise, the pandemic thwarted many of our plans to conduct health screening activities for the foreign worker community, to pick up on chronic conditions and treat them.

Our regular visits to homes for the disabled were put on hold, and our Smiles for Good denture programme also had to be suspended during the Circuit Breaker.

However, we are adapting to the 'new norm' and patiently but persistently working around the obstacles in our way. Since entering Phase 3 of the Government's safe reopening plan, we have fully resumed services at all the Mount Alvernia Outreach Medical Clinics and Mount Alvernia

Outreach Dental Clinic, with safe distancing measures in place and in full compliance with ongoing protocols.

After some delays, we are looking forward to the opening of our second outreach dental clinic at Enabling Village in Redhill, which is located in the western part of Singapore.

## FOND MEMORIES AND WELL WISHES

In our 60th Anniversary year, we asked Anthea Neo, Assistant Director and Head of Community Outreach to share her fond memories of Mount Alvernia Hospital.

"In the last decade that I've been here, Mount Alvernia Hospital has changed so much. The campus landscape is constantly evolving since the day I joined, with new medical centres and a new maternity and paediatric building. We have continually expanded and advanced to keep up with the changing healthcare needs of the population," reflected Anthea. "Yet spiritually we have returned more to our roots with greater emphasis on our mission. Our heritage and ethos differentiate us from the other healthcare players and make the work we do even more meaningful."

As for her wishes for the future of the hospital, Anthea shared, "May the hospital grow stronger with each passing year, and continue to be imbued with the missionary spirit of the FMDM Sisters. May we bring pride to the legacy that they started."

On that note, we thank the Community Outreach team for bringing our founding Sisters' loving legacy to life – and touching the lives of the thousands of Singaporeans, foreign workers and beneficiaries they serve.

## Mount Alvernia Community Outreach

### WHAT WE DO:

- Our medical clinic provides general practitioner consultation and medication for the management of common acute illnesses such as fever, diarrhoea, headaches and giddiness, and the prevention and management of chronic conditions such as diabetics, high blood pressure and other chronic conditions.
- Our dental clinic provides basic dental services including routine scaling and polishing, fillings and extractions. Free dentures are provided through our Smiles for Good Programme in partnership with Caritas Singapore.
- We run mobile clinic sessions at outreach partner venues for groups that have difficult coming to the clinic, such as foreign workers, people with disabilities, isolated seniors and young children from vulnerable families.
- We provide dietetics support for seniors in partnership with not-for-profit nursing homes.
- Other mobile services include flu vaccinations, dental and ad hoc health screening and healthcare-related talks.
- Specialist consultations and inpatient admissions at Mount Alvernia Hospital are provided for selected beneficiaries referred to us by our social service agency partners.



# Our Outreach Journey



1961

Mount Alvernia Hospital, a 60-bed hospital, opens.



1969

A new wing, catering to aged and chronically ill patients in financial need, opens. It is named Khoo Block after its benefactor, Mr Khoo Yang Tin.



1982

The wing formerly known as Khoo Block is renamed Assisi Hospice. It offers respite care and later, palliative care.



1992

The FMDM Sisters vacate their own home and convent to accommodate a much larger hospice with single rooms for hospice patients.



1993

The renamed Assisi Home and Hospice opens in April 1993, providing Inpatient, Home Care and Day care services to meet the growing demand for palliative care.

2007

Assisi Home and Hospice reverts to its earlier name of Assisi Hospice. Its Home Care service is extended to weekends, with on-call nurses providing better access to palliative care for patients who wish to remain at home.

2017

The Assisi team moves patients over to a new Assisi Hospice building. Specialised inpatient Paediatric and Dementia palliative services with purpose-built wards commence – a first in Singapore.

2016

Mobile services, including a mobile clinic, flu vaccinations and home visits, commence.

In collaboration with KK Women's and Children's Hospital, our first dental clinic opens at Agape Village alongside a second outreach medical clinic.

The first of many patients referred by our partners, such as MSF and SPECTacular, receive specialist consultations and hospital services.

2015

Mount Alvernia Hospital establishes a medical clinic for the vulnerable and marginalised members of our community at Enabling Village (EV).



2014

The Mount Alvernia Hospital Board decides to establish a new outreach venture.

2013

A Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new Assisi hospice is held. It is envisioned as a purpose-built healing environment for patients and families.

2009

A Community Outreach programme, offering health screening and health talks, is officially established.



2018

A subsidised basic dental care programme for Foreign Domestic Workers is launched.

We embark on a partnership with Singapore General Hospital to station community nurses at EV medical clinic twice a week.

A Community Outreach Resource and Strategy Group is formed.



2019

Our community dental initiative, Smiles for Good, provides the first of many free dentures for patients.



2021

A second dental clinic is planned to open at Enabling Village.





# Dr Julian Theng and Dr Colin Theng

We had the pleasure of chatting with brothers Dr Julian Theng, Founder, Group Chairman and Ophthalmologist at Eagle Eye Centre, and Dr Colin Theng, Senior Consultant Dermatologist at The Skin Specialists & Laser Clinic. We learned how they are bonded by medicine, faith and family ties.



Dr Colin Theng and Dr Julian Theng

**My Alvernia:** Who is the older brother?

**Colin:** There are four siblings in the family. Our eldest brother Danny works in IT, and our elder sister Lisa works as a lawyer and managing partner at a law firm. Then comes Julian and then me, the youngest. We are all one year apart in age.

**My Alvernia:** Are you similar or different to each other?

**Colin:** I think we are quite different. Julian is a dreamer and more of a risk-taker, while I am more cautious. However, we are similar in that we are both kind at heart, and committed to work and family.

**Julian:** I agree with Colin in that we do have different styles. But what drives us both is the strength of our faith. Whatever our faith prompts us to do, we pursue it to the very best of our ability.

**My Alvernia:** What inspired you to pursue careers in medicine?

**Colin:** As a child, I felt that medicine was a noble profession. I think this was partly influenced by my parents who had always wanted us to be doctors. I was quite single-minded in wanting to do medicine, and when Julian got into medicine first, he supported my choice. I have no regrets.

**Julian:** As Colin said, our parents' desire for us to be doctors was a driving force. Aside from that, my parents had me take care of our grandmother when I was young. Administering her insulin jabs every morning was my early training in the medical field.

“Dermatology is interesting because it is very visual. Often, you can diagnose the skin condition by just looking at it without having to do lab tests and imaging studies. Dermatology is also quite diverse.”

*Dr Colin Theng*

**My Alvernia:** Can you share the story of a particularly memorable case?

**Colin:** One of my most memorable patients was a lovely lady who came to see me because of her severe psoriasis, a chronic

skin condition. She was very depressed and wanted to separate from her husband because she felt unworthy of him. Her unsightly appearance had affected her self-esteem. With treatment, her skin cleared up completely and when she saw me in the clinic again, she looked radiant and said her life was back to normal and her marriage had been saved. It really made my day, knowing that we can make a big difference in our patients' lives.

**Julian:** There are so many memorable patients, but one that stands out in particular is Singapore celebrity actor Edmond Chen. About 10 years after his first visit to my clinic, he came to see me about his son who had been blinded by an infection of the cornea that caused a very bad scar. He had already consulted numerous doctors, and heard about the pros and cons and risks of cornea transplantation in his son's eye. Because of the high risks involved, he had been procrastinating about whether or not to have the transplant done for his son.

I believe he was trying me out as a doctor when he recommended his mother for cataract surgery. Subsequently, he recommended his sister, for whom I performed refractive surgery.

After these successful surgeries, his confidence grew. Finally, after six years of waiting, he allowed me to be his son's





cornea transplant surgeon. It has been close to 10 years now since the surgery was done here at Mount Alvernia Hospital. It went well, as I managed to restore his son's vision. I've also done Lasik for his other eye and now he enjoys 6/6 vision. They've been very grateful patients, and we have become good friends. It was a wonderful outcome.

**My Alvernia:** Are your spouses and children in medicine and healthcare too?

**Julian:** My wife was a teacher, but stopped teaching when our second child was born. My kids were at one point in time interested in medicine but now they have grown up, they have focused on their other passions like music, arts and business.

**Colin:** My wife is a doctor too, and used to work as a GP. My daughter is currently studying medicine in Dublin.

**My Alvernia:** Was it by design or coincidence that you both ended up in private practice at Mount Alvernia Hospital?

**Colin:** Julian enjoyed working at Mount Alvernia Hospital and loved the working environment there. So, when the opportunity arose, I set up my private practice there as well. I especially like the hospital's Catholic culture and its wonderful staff.

**Julian:** I encouraged Colin to join Mount Alvernia Hospital partly because I felt that the hospital's mission and vision are similar to those of Eagle Eye Centre – to serve with love and compassion.

**My Alvernia:** What attracted you to your respective specialties of dermatology and ophthalmology?

**Colin:** I think dermatology is interesting because it is very visual. Often, you can

diagnose the skin condition by just looking at it without having to do lab tests and imaging studies. Dermatology is also quite diverse – we treat skin, hair and nail diseases, sexually transmitted infections, do skin surgeries and laser treatments, and aesthetic procedures too. This makes our work very challenging and enjoyable. When I did a rotation as a medical officer at the National Skin Centre, I really enjoyed dermatology and so I decided to become a dermatologist.

**Julian:** I chose ophthalmology as a specialty only after I had an attachment as a medical officer at the eye department at Singapore National Eye Centre. It was quite an 'eye opener' for me. I realised how rewarding a profession it is, because it really makes the blind see. Seeing the joy on the faces of so many patients immediately after their life-changing Lasik experiences made me say – this is the job for me!

**My Alvernia:** Are eye conditions ever related to skin conditions and vice versa? And have you ever collaborated on crossover cases?

**Colin:** Yes, there are conditions that have both eye and skin symptoms, and we have collaborated on some before. I remember Julian referring me a case of a patient who had red eyes with skin rashes and was found to have an underlying autoimmune disease.

**My Alvernia:** What is the most common condition that you see in your respective practices?

**Julian:** Cataract and Lasik surgeries are the main volume of work that I do, as well as cornea transplantation. The high prevalence of ophthalmic disorders in Southeast Asia and Singapore is primarily due to the rise in the ageing population. For example, about 48 percent of people in Southeast Asia are affected by cataract and this figure is expected to rise gradually.

**Colin:** In my clinic, the most common skin condition I see is eczema. This is also the most common condition seen at the National Skin Centre. In Singapore, eczema is a very common skin condition that affects up to 20 percent of the population. Eczema rates tend to be higher in more developed countries, which may explain why there are so many cases in Singapore.

**My Alvernia:** What is the most significant development or breakthrough in each of your respective fields in the last 10 years, and in the last 2 years?

**Colin:** In the last 10 years, there have been many advances in dermatology treatments, especially for psoriasis. These new treatments include biologics treatments, whereby antibodies are injected into the body to bind to specific treatment targets.

The numerous new biologics for the treatment of psoriasis are extremely effective and have a good safety profile. In the past two years, biologic treatment has also been approved for the treatment of eczema. For eczema sufferers, this is a breakthrough treatment that has been proven to be a safe and effective alternative to traditional oral medications.

**"I encouraged Colin to join Mount Alvernia Hospital partly because I felt that the hospital's mission and vision are similar to those of Eagle Eye Centre – to serve with love and compassion."**

*Dr Julian Theng*

**Julian:** My involvement with cornea transplantation and artificial eye transplants 10 years ago was definitely a catalyst in my current practice as well as the advancements on presbyopia, which I wrote a book on 10 years back. This allows different techniques and methods to free patients from glasses.

**My Alvernia:** How has COVID-19 affected your respective practices?

**Colin:** COVID-19 has changed my practice significantly. We observe safe distancing protocols and have stepped up the frequency of cleaning surfaces. We have also been doing more teleconsultations for patients, as well as home delivery of medications.

**Julian:** The impact of COVID-19 led to opportunities for improvement in running our practice with the aid of digital technology. At all of our centres, we observe safe distancing protocols and follow the measures advised by the Ministry of Health.

**My Alvernia:** What is your advice to our readers on how to look after their skin health and eye health?

**Colin:** Sun protection is extremely important as the sun accelerates skin ageing, causes pigmentation and increases the risk of skin cancer. Avoiding unnecessary sun exposure and using sunblock regularly is very important.

**Julian:** Most of the advice for reading in bright light conditions and not spending too long in computers is more applicable for children with developing eyes and vision. For adults, just eat well, stay healthy and go for regular eye checks when you have any issues. That's all you need to worry about.

**My Alvernia:** Thank you, gentlemen, for the insights into brotherhood and the medical fraternity. We greatly enjoyed the conversation.

**Dr Colin Theng**  
Dermatologist  
The Skin Specialists & Laser Clinic  
Medical Centre D #07-61

**Dr Julian Theng**  
Ophthalmologist  
Eagle Eye Centre  
Medical Centre D #06-57/58/59/60/61/62





Dr Piotr Chlebicki receiving the vaccine at Mount Alvernia Hospital

# COVID-19 Vaccines

## Your Questions Answered

Dr Piotr Chlebicki, Infectious Diseases Specialist at Infectious Diseases Medical Clinic, addresses common questions and concerns about the vaccines that have been approved for use in Singapore.

**Q** What is your professional opinion on the vaccines approved for use in Singapore's COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine?

**A** Both of these vaccines have been proven effective not only in clinical trials but also in real life. In clinical trials, the effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine was 94 percent. In the real-life experience in Israel, where around 70 percent of the population has been vaccinated, it is also very positive. I have had the Pfizer vaccine myself, and I think it is a very good vaccine. In fact, it has exceeded expectations. (See 'The Israel Experience'.)

**“Most of us will be vaccinated and our lives will slowly return to normal.”**

Dr Piotr Chlebicki

**Q** Why are the vaccines administered in two doses – 21 days apart for the Pfizer vaccine and 28 days apart for the Moderna vaccine?

**A** The first dose is to prime the immune system. The second dose is sort of like a reminder. When the immune system learns how to fight the virus, the second dose is an enhancer or booster dose.

**Q** The Ministry of Health website warns that severe allergic reactions, including “eye, mouth, or facial swelling, difficulty in breathing and/or a fall in blood pressure” may take place after receiving the vaccine. How common are these allergic reactions?

**A** This describes a severe allergic reaction to almost anything. The risk is present with all vaccines, but it is a question of frequency. In clinical trials, the risk of severe allergic reactions was 1 in 100,000 for the Pfizer vaccine, so it is very infrequent. This number comes from one week of reporting from the US in the second half of December. Very soon we will have data based on several weeks of reporting. My guess is that the frequency of severe allergic reactions will be shown to be even lower than that already low number.

**Q** If a person has had and recovered from COVID-19, are they considered immune?

**A** This is a controversial topic. Initially, for the first several months after infection, the vast majority of patients appear to have very good immunity. However, data shows that after some time, in some people, the antibody level drops. More time, and more data, will tell us more.

**Q** Should people who have had COVID-19 be vaccinated?

**A** It depends on the geographical perspective. In countries where the pandemic is raging, it does not make sense logistically to check who has and has not had COVID-19. Whether it is really helpful is open for debate. I think the compromise may be to give these people one dose instead of two doses, to boost their own antibodies.

**Q** If a person has had COVID-19 and is then vaccinated, would they have a higher than normal risk of suffering serious side effects after receiving the vaccine?

**A** Initially, with other vaccines a previous infection can increase the risk of serious side effects. But so far, this does not seem to apply to the approved COVID-19 vaccines.

**Q** Why do the approved vaccines not work in a small percentage of people?

**A** There are a few reasons. There is a small proportion of people who just do not respond to vaccines. These are usually people with certain medical conditions, with severely weakened immune systems that are unable to mount an appropriate defence response. There is also an issue with how cases are counted. In clinical trials, the few people who developed COVID-19 after being vaccinated may have developed a very mild version, but this is still counted as an

infection. It is hard to tell right now, because these numbers are calculated on the basis of a very small sample group, usually fewer than or around 200 people. This number will be more precise when the data is based on more people and on real-life situations rather than trial settings, which is one of the reasons why the world is watching the Israel experience so carefully.



**Q** The MOH advises that the approved COVID-19 vaccines are not recommended for pregnant women, severely immunocompromised persons, and children under the age of 16 years. Why is this so?

**A** 'Not recommended' does not mean that the vaccine would be harmful in any way, it is simply because these three groups of people are excluded from clinical trials. As far as we know, there is no real reason that the vaccines will harm them. 'Not recommended' does not mean 'contra-indicated'. It is quite likely that within the next few months, when the results of more studies come out, these subgroups will be able to get this vaccine.

### The Israel Experience

#### Israel

- A small country
- A highly digitised, universal health system
- Setting for extensive real-world trial of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

#### The deal with Pfizer

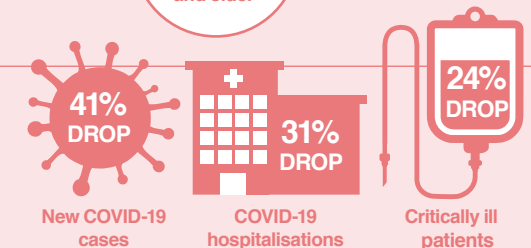
- Data is promised in exchange for a steady supply of BioNTech vaccines

#### December 2020

- Vaccination programme commences
- Nearly 90 percent of people 60 years and older receive vaccines

#### 6 weeks later

In sample vaccinated group (people aged 60 years and older)



NOTE: In early February, Clalit, Israel's largest healthcare provider, reported a 94 percent drop in symptomatic COVID-19 cases among 600,000 people who had received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine. This is aligned with the 94 percent effectiveness found during clinical trials of the vaccine.

Sources:  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-israel-pfizer-idUSKBN2AH281>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/05/world/middleeast/israel-virus-vaccination.html>



**Q** Do new mutant strains pose a threat to people who have had COVID-19 or been vaccinated?

**A** There are many mutant strains, but the two that are most worrying are those from South Africa and Brazil. There are some signals that even though you may have had COVID-19, you may get it one of these two strains again. There was an interesting study done in the Amazon region of Brazil. More than 70 percent of the population already had COVID-19 and therefore had antibodies, which is close to what we consider to be herd immunity. But despite that, there was a major second wave anyway. This serves as a warning that we may see new strains that have different properties, so to speak.

**Q** Have there been any cases of these two worrying new strains in Singapore?

**A** Not that I know of. It is unlikely that the imported cases that we are seeing come from South Africa or Brazil, due to travel restrictions.

**Q** We have heard that some vaccines can alter DNA. Is there any such risk associated with the approved COVID-19 vaccines?

**A** Live attenuated vaccines are made from weak live virus cells, such as measles and chickenpox vaccines. These are never given to pregnant women. However, the approved vaccines are both mRNA vaccines – or messenger RNA vaccines. These vaccines contain small pieces of genetic information that are enclosed in lipid envelopes. There are no live virus cells or DNA present, so there is no chance that the vaccines can be incorporated in our DNA.

**Q** What is your general advice to the Singaporean public regarding COVID-19 vaccination?

**A** The supply of vaccines is limited, and there are groups of people who will benefit more from being vaccinated than others, such as the elderly, people with serious medical conditions, and frontline healthcare workers. These priority groups will receive the vaccines first. Of course it would be nice to say – the sooner the better, but we have to balance

this optimistic scenario with what is available. If and when the vaccines arrive in sufficient amounts, no doubt things will speed up. But for now, we just need to be patient, and continue to observe good hygiene, social distancing and mask wearing. That is all we can do.

**Q** What are your predictions for the future of the pandemic in Singapore?

**A** Locally, sooner or later, most of us will be vaccinated and our lives will slowly return to normal. In fact, it is already happening. The big question that everyone is trying to figure out is – when will the borders reopen so that we can travel again? Unfortunately that depends not only on how we handle the pandemic in Singapore, but on what happens in other countries, which is beyond our control.

**Dr Piotr Chlebicki**  
Infectious Diseases Specialist  
Infectious Diseases Medical Clinic  
Medical Centre D #07-57

### Vaccines Approved for Use in Singapore

- Both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines or messenger RNA vaccines
- mRNA vaccines contain material from the COVID-19 virus that gives our cells instructions on how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus
- Our cells make copies of the protein then destroy the genetic material from the vaccine
- Our bodies then recognise that the protein should not be there and build antibodies to fight the virus

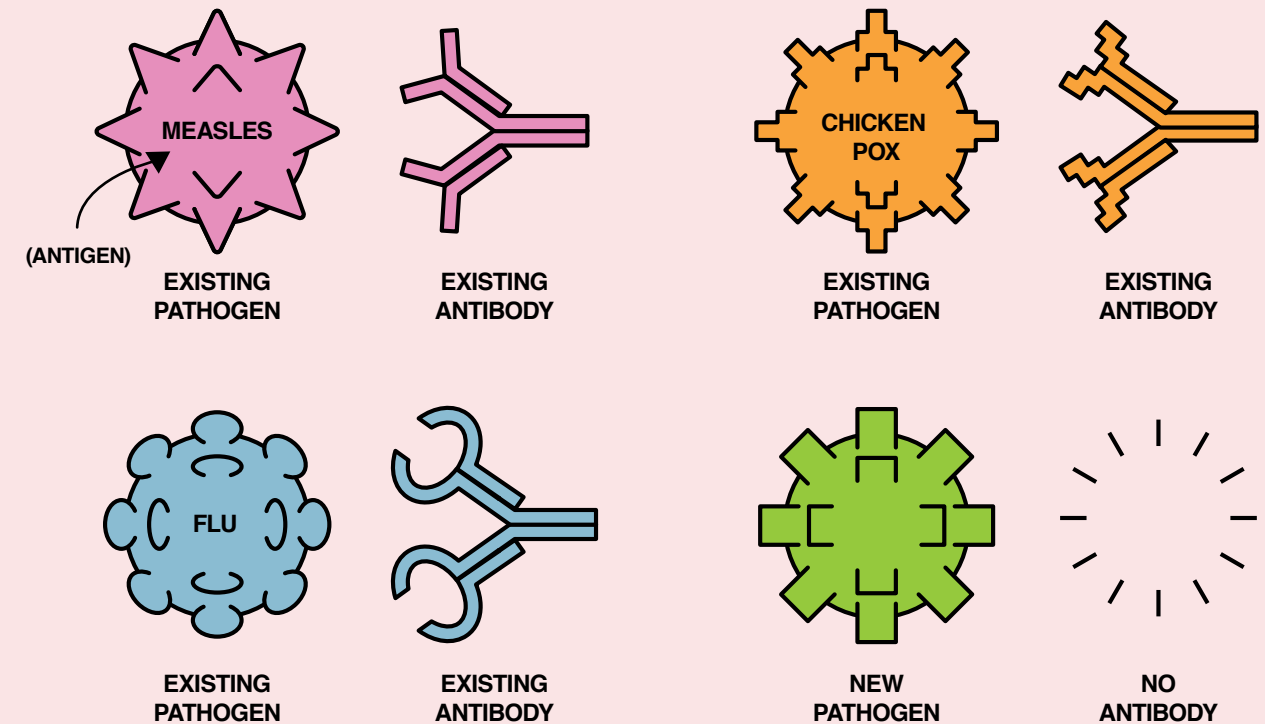
Source:  
<https://www.gov.sg/article/what-you-should-know-about-the-covid-19-vaccine>



## How Vaccines Work

### Human Immune System (without Vaccination)

A new pathogen or disease enters the body and introduces a new antigen. In response to the new antigen, the body builds a specific antibody. The antibody grabs onto the antigen and defeats the pathogen.

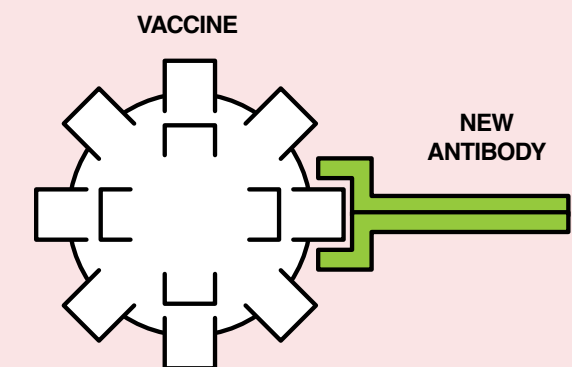


### Human Immune System (with Vaccination)

A vaccine that includes parts of the antigen from the targeted pathogen enters the body.

In response to the new antigen, the body builds a specific antibody.

If the pathogen and its corresponding antigen enter the body later, the antibody grabs onto the antigen and defeats the pathogen.



Source:  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/how-do-vaccines-work>



# Midwifery Then and Now



Sister Tarcisius Leong, with the first baby born in Mount Alvernia Hospital in 1961

Our veteran midwife, Ng Geok Pin or ‘Sister N.G.’ as she is known amongst her colleagues, Assistant Director of Nursing at Mount Alvernia Hospital, reminisces and reflects on how far midwifery has come during her 45 years of ushering new lives into the world.

## THE CONSTANTS AND THE CHANGES

According to N.G., there have been few major changes to the job definition and responsibilities of midwives since 1976, when she first qualified as a midwife and worked at BMI Mount Alvernia Hospital in Guildford, England. The main difference is that back then midwives were allowed to deliver babies in private hospitals without the presence of an obstetrician.

In fact, as N.G. was trained in the UK, she was allowed to not only conduct deliveries but also teach student midwives. In the UK, she even delivered babies at patients’ homes.

Training, too, has remained relatively consistent over the years. In N.G.’s day, only Registered Nurses who had undergone three years of general training could proceed to study for their Advanced Diploma in

Midwifery. The same applies today, only an Advanced Diploma in Midwifery now takes eight months to complete compared to the previous 12 months.

## MORE EDUCATED PARENTS ARE MORE PREPARED PARENTS

One factor that has had an impact on midwives’ job responsibilities is the mindset of parents. Whereas once fear and confusion reigned, modern parents are generally calmer and more composed, according to N.G., a fact that she attributes to widespread education.

“Thanks to the availability of antenatal classes, today’s new parents are generally well prepared and understand what labour is all about,” said N.G. “They used to be quite fearful and sometimes at a complete loss when the time came to be admitted to the labour ward.”

## CHANGES TO ‘NATURAL’ DELIVERIES

Whereas once only the midwife may have been present for a natural delivery following a low-risk pregnancy, today it involves a team of at least three, in addition to mother and child.

“In the old days, there was no placing of the patient’s legs in stirrups. She simply pulled back her thighs and pushed or bore down, following the midwife’s prompts,” recalled N.G. “Today, there are always two nurses and an obstetrician in the delivery room to assist the mother at the point of delivery. One of the nurses may not be a midwife. At times, a paediatrician may also be present if the baby is at risk.”

## CHANGES TO ASSISTED AND EMERGENCY DELIVERIES

As for assisted deliveries, little has changed with regard to the instruments used. N.G. shared that Wrigley’s forceps, Neville Barnes



Sister N.G. with a newborn baby in Mount Alvernia Hospital in 2021

forceps and Kielland’s rotational forceps are still used by obstetricians, based on their preference and the position of the baby. The main addition to the ‘toolkit’ is a disposable unit called a Kiwi® cup, which has found favour among obstetricians in recent years.

With regard to caesarean deliveries, N.G. recalled that while parents’ consent used to be obtained by a trained nurse, now the responsibility lies with the obstetrician.

“The obstetrician is now responsible for obtaining consent from the patient. He or she is obliged to explain the nature, indication and possible side effects of the operation,” shared N.G.

## THE DELIVERY OF COMFORT

Today, midwives have considerably more resources to draw on for the purposes of comforting a distressed mother.

“Today, we can remind the mother of the breathing exercises that she learnt during her antenatal classes. We can also offer her Entonox gas, a safe form of pain relief that consists of 50 percent oxygen and 50 percent nitrous oxide,” shared N.G. If the patient is fit to get out of bed, music, aromatherapy and warm showers can also help.

of giving birth. Midwives comfort anxious fathers in the same way that they always have, with soothing words and a reminder of God’s gift waiting at the end of the ordeal.

“We will patiently explain the progress of the wife’s labour, assuring him that frequent and strong contractions are nature’s way to gradually help the descent of the baby’s head and dilate the mother’s cervix to the 10cm mark, which is when she can bear down and push,” shared N.G. “We will constantly remind him that he will soon see his lovely little bundle of joy!”

## PRECIOUS MEMORIES

When we asked N.G. to share some of her fondest memories as a midwife, she provided this litany of meaningful moments.

“Seeing first-time mothers very determined to push their babies out, tearful parents holding their newborn with smiles and tears rolling down at the same time – these are always special moments,” reminisced N.G.

On a more comical though somewhat alarming note, she recalled, “One father fainted as the baby was born. Another fellow got carried away, happily snapping photos of his newborn and overlooking the presence of the wife, who had just endured the hardship of labour. He had completely forgotten all about her until she called out to him and asked him to take a picture of her holding the baby!”

## GIVING BIRTH, SHARING HAPPINESS

“Giving birth is a happy occasion. I get the immense job satisfaction of seeing the arrival of newborns and sharing in the happiness of the parents and grandparents,” said N.G.

Midwifery – from all reports, sounds like one of the hardest but happiest jobs in the world.

“Giving birth is a happy occasion. I get the immense job satisfaction of seeing the arrival of newborns and sharing in the happiness of the parents and grandparents.”

Sister N.G.

What has not changed are the words of encouragement and positive reinforcement that are never far from midwives’ lips. Now that fathers are usually present at their babies’ births, midwives often ask husbands to hold their wives’ hands and do the breathing exercises with them.

N.G. confirmed that sometimes fathers become more emotional than mothers, who are immersed in the physical challenge



# Looking at Floaters

Do you see specks, spots or cobwebs in your field of vision? Chances are, they are floaters. Dr Stephanie Young, Senior Consultant and Director of Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery at Eagle Eye Centre, sheds light on this common condition.

## WHAT ARE FLOATERS?

Eye floaters are spots in your vision. They may look like black or grey specks, strings or cobwebs that drift about when you move your eyes, and appear to dart away when you try to look at them directly.

Floaters may appear as:

- small shapes in your vision that appear as dark specks or knobby, transparent strings of floating material
- spots that move when you move your eyes, so when you try to look at them, they move quickly out of your visual field
- spots that are most noticeable when you look at a plain bright background, such as a blue sky or a white wall
- small shapes or strings that eventually settle down and drift out of the line of vision

## WHAT CAUSES THEM?

Most eye floaters are caused by age-related changes in the vitreous, the jelly-like substance that fills the eyeballs and helps to maintain their round shape.

“Over time, the vitreous partially liquefies — a process that causes it to pull away from the eyeball’s interior surface. As the vitreous shrinks and sags, it clumps and gets stringy.

This debris blocks some of the light passing through the eye, casting tiny shadows on your retina that are seen as floaters,” explained Dr Young.

Any activity, such as rapidly moving your eyes to look at something, can stir up these gel clumps and make floaters more noticeable. Exercise that involves pronounced head movements, such as jogging and trampoline jumping, can have the same effect.

## WHY DO THEY SEEM TO ONLY OCCUR IN ONE EYE?

Floaters may occur in one or both eyes. The severity may differ in both eyes resulting in asymmetrical symptoms, which can lead patients to think they have floaters in one eye only.

## WILL THEY GO AWAY ON THEIR OWN?

For many people, eye floaters do not necessarily go away over time, but become less noticeable when they slowly sink within the vitreous and eventually settle at the bottom of the eye. Once this happens, they stop being noticeable and most people think they have gone away.

## WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE A DOCTOR?

The good news is, most of the time floaters are harmless.

An ophthalmologist should be consulted immediately if you notice:

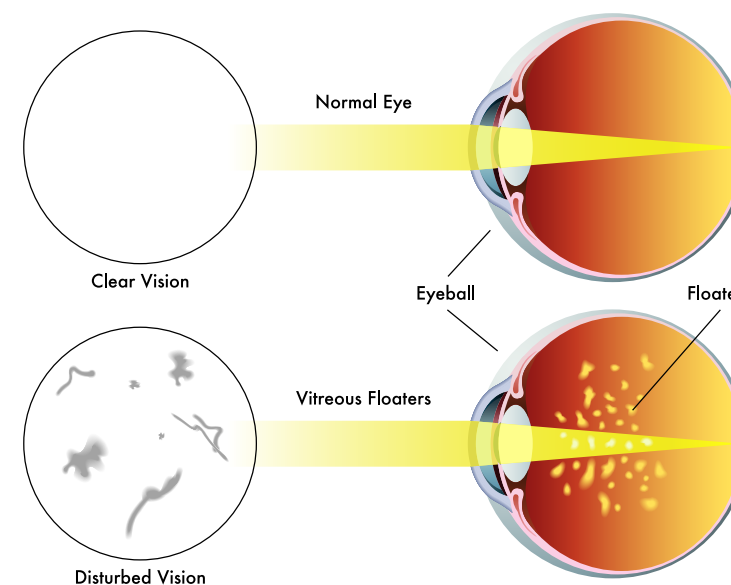
- many more eye floaters than usual
- a sudden onset of new floaters
- flashes of light in the same eye as the floaters
- darkness on any side or sides of your vision (peripheral vision loss)

## WHAT SERIOUS UNDERLYING CONDITIONS COULD THEY INDICATE?

Apart from the normal ageing of the vitreous jelly in the eye, floaters may sometimes indicate other eye conditions. Here are some of them.

- Inflammation in the back of the eye, or posterior uveitis, can cause the release of inflammatory debris into the vitreous that are seen as floaters. It may be caused by infection, inflammatory diseases or other causes.

## Normal Eye vs. Eye with Floaters



- Bleeding in the eye, caused by diabetes, hypertension, blocked blood vessels or injury, can release blood cells that are seen as floaters.
- Torn retina, or retinal tears, can occur when a sagging vitreous tugs on the retina with enough force to tear it. Without treatment, a retinal tear may lead to retinal detachment — an accumulation of fluid behind the retina that causes it to separate from the back of your eye. Untreated retinal detachment can cause permanent vision loss.
- Eye surgeries and eye medications that are injected into the vitreous can cause air bubbles to form. These bubbles are seen as shadows until your eye absorbs them. Certain vitreoretinal surgeries add silicone oil bubbles into the vitreous that can also be seen as floaters.

## HOW ARE THEY TREATED?

“Sometimes the best treatment is nothing at all. Coping with eye floaters is the least invasive option to protect your eyes,” said Dr Young.

“Sometimes the best treatment is nothing at all. Coping with eye floaters is the least invasive option to protect your eyes.”

*Dr Stephanie Young*

If floaters impair vision and interfere with daily life, a surgical procedure called a vitrectomy can remove them. However, this surgery has its risks and benefits, which should be discussed at length with an ophthalmologist. The surgery should be done by a vitreoretinal surgeon.

During a vitrectomy, the surgeon removes the vitreous through a small incision and replaces it with a solution to maintain the shape of the eye. The body will then produce more vitreous that will eventually replace

the solution. Though generally effective, a vitrectomy may not always remove floaters. If the procedure causes bleeding or trauma, they may form again.

Some doctors may also offer laser therapy, which involves aiming lasers at the floaters in order to break them up and reduce their presence. However, this procedure can occasionally result in retinal damage.

“Laser therapy is not the preferred treatment method since it is still experimental. While seen as an effective treatment for some cases, some people have noticed little to no improvement. It can also worsen floaters in some instances,” cautioned Dr Young. “Discuss your options with your doctor before pursuing this method.”

## LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR EYES

Although it may not be possible to prevent eye floaters, Dr Young emphasises the importance of following some basic practices to keep the eyes healthy.

“Eat a varied, nutritious diet, quit smoking, wear sunglasses outdoors and protective eyewear when necessary, and avoid potential injury to the eye,” advised Dr Young.

Then, with or without floaters and in the absence of any serious underlying conditions, the future of your eye health should look very bright indeed.

**Dr Stephanie Young**  
Senior Consultant  
Director of Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery  
Eagle Eye Centre Pte Ltd (EEC)  
Medical Centre D #06-57/58/59/60/61/62



# Breastfeeding for Beginners

Motherhood does not come with an instruction manual, and every woman's experience of breastfeeding is different. Xing Li, Lactation Consultant at Alvernia Parentcraft Centre, shares some reassuring expert advice for first-time mums.

## FIRST-TIME FEARS

Some first-time mothers worry that their milk supply will be insufficient, while others fear the pain associated with engorged breasts and babies' first attempts at latching on.

While these concerns are understandable, Li shared that breastfeeding does not have to be more stressful for first-time mothers than second- and third-timers. Having just one child on which to focus your efforts can actually be less stressful than having to divide your attention between a toddler and a newborn.

Li emphasised the importance of managing stress and first-time nerves, since these emotions can suppress the release of the breastfeeding hormone oxytocin, which in fact helps induce a state of calm.

## FEED ON DEMAND

The old school regime of scheduled feeds has fallen out of favour, according to Li.

"Feeding on demand is the definite answer, as only your baby knows when he is hungry and how much he wants to take from the breasts," said Li. Since many newborns are sleepy within the first two weeks of life, mothers should wake them up for a feed every four hours or so, she added.

When all goes according to nature's plan, pregnancy hormones prepare a mother well for breastfeeding. Typically, a woman starts producing breastmilk at around 16 weeks into her pregnancy. Hence, almost all mothers have plenty of milk readily available for their babies after delivery.

"Feeding on demand with good latching or a correct expression technique will almost always stimulate the breasts to produce ample milk for your baby," assured Li. Milk-boosting products are occasionally recommended when not enough milk is

being produced, but only after it has been established that the baby is latching on correctly and/or the mother is expressing correctly.

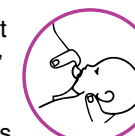
**"Feeding on demand is the definite answer, as only your baby knows when he is hungry and how much he wants to take from the breasts".**

Xing Li

## LATCHING ON

First-time mums are often unsure of what constitutes 'correct latching on'. Li offered this simple checklist:

- Baby's mouth is wide open and covers a large portion of the areola
- Baby's nose is free and their chin touches the breast
- A 'suck, swallow and pause' rhythm is observed
- There are no clicking sounds or drawing in of baby's cheeks
- Breast softens while baby latches on and drains it of milk



## WHEN RETURNING TO WORK

If a mother has to return to work before her baby is ready to be weaned, she should express enough milk for the feeds she will miss while she is away from her baby. Efficient electrical 'double pumping', of both breasts concurrently, is preferred by most working mothers.

Li stresses the importance of always labelling expressed breastmilk with dates and times. Safe storage times vary according to different temperatures.

## Storage of Expressed Breastmilk

Room Temperature (<25°C)	4 hours
Cooler bag with Ice pack (<15°C)	24 hours
Refrigerator (<4°C)	48 hours
Freezer (<-18°C)	6 months

For those lucky mums who are able to work from home, Li recommends the continuation of demand feeding and suggests investing in a baby carrier and nursing bib to maximise mobility and minimise mess.

## WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Breastfeeding should be a beautiful, natural bonding experience that brings joy, not pain. If a mother feels pain during or after feeding, she should visit a board-certified lactation consultant.

Similarly, if repeated attempts to breastfeed are unsuccessful, the mother should seek help from a lactation consultant or breastfeeding mothers' support group. It is important to gain the support of family members and friends, too.

If you are a first-time mum contemplating breastfeeding, fret not. Breastmilk is nature's healthiest fast food and chances are you will be a 'natural'.

Source:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm)

**Alvernia Parentcraft Centre**  
Tel: 6347 6641



## Baby & You

How to Emotionally Prepare for Parenthood When You Are Expecting

# How to Emotionally Prepare for Parenthood When You Are Expecting

Amazing news! You are expecting your first baby. But what can you do to emotionally prepare for parenthood? Practise these five easy steps before becoming a mum and you will be as ready as you can be when your bundle of joy finally arrives.

### 1. DO NOT HAVE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Start off by repeating this over and over again, "There is no such thing as the perfect parent." Mistakes will be made, so cut yourself some slack. You may have a high-need baby, or you may have an easy baby. You might find breastfeeding comes easily to you, or it might take some perseverance. You will not know your baby's temperament, or what their feeding/sleeping patterns will be, until their arrival. Embrace the unknown and do not let it overwhelm you.

### 2. SLOW DOWN YOUR PACE

Accept now that you will be doing everything at a much slower speed. Whether that is initially recovering from birth or even getting out the door for a breath of fresh air, give yourself time to adjust to being a new mum. There is no rush and everything can wait. You have a playdate at 11am, but you turn up at midday due to your baby deciding they are hungry again? No worries! Everyone is going to understand – that is life with a newborn.

### 3. PRACTISE SELF-CARE WHILE PREGNANT

Remember to take time for yourself. Look into prenatal yoga classes, which are a great way to relax and meet some like-minded mums-to-be. And both you and your partner should sleep as much as you possibly can. You will be sleep-deprived parents for a long while once you give birth, so this is the perfect time to enjoy leisurely weekend lie-ins together.

**Family and friends can help guide you through your emotions during pregnancy and into parenthood.**

### 4. DISCUSS PARENTING DUTIES

Have an honest chat with your partner about what you are both expecting when you become parents. Talk through parenting

duties and household chores, and how you both feel these should be shared. Not feeling emotionally and practically supported can cause relationship problems for new parents, so it is best to be open about it now.

### 5. PREPARE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK NOW

Family and friends can help guide you through your emotions during pregnancy and into parenthood. Connect with like-minded, soon-to-be parents at new parents' groups and pregnancy classes. Combine it with a hobby like prenatal exercise classes. It will keep you healthy and fit, while giving you the opportunity to connect with other pregnant mums.

Get useful resources and tips for every parenting stage here:  
<https://www.babyandme.nestle.com.sg/parenting-support>

Article courtesy of Nestlé

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# Fussy? Gassy? Crying?

Feeding and nurturing your baby after 6 months is a special and rewarding experience. However, when your baby's delicate tummy cannot digest food comfortably, he may encounter some digestive discomfort and the meal times may not be as enjoyable.



## MAKE MEALTIMES HAPPY TIMES

You are not alone. About 50 percent of babies have similar discomfort as your baby during their first year<sup>#</sup>. The good news is that most babies will outgrow it. Here are the answers to some common questions, which will hopefully help ease your baby's delicate tummy – so meal times can be happy times, too.

### Q Why does my baby's tummy seem to be sensitive and delicate?

A It takes time for your baby's digestive system to fully mature as part of his developmental process. During this period of growth, his tummy is usually delicate, small and growing in size. And it is not unusual for him to experience digestive discomfort.

### Q What are the symptoms of digestive discomfort and what causes them<sup>1</sup>?

A During or after feeding, your baby may appear uncomfortable and unhappy.

He can pass gas. Occasional gas is completely normal for most babies, as it is often caused by air swallowed while feeding or crying. If the air is not burped back up, it can become trapped in the digestive tract, bloating your little one's tummy and making him uncomfortable.

Spit-up is also a common occurrence for a baby. A baby's tummy is delicate, small and growing in size; sometimes it is hard for him to keep all of his food down.

He may be fussy or he may cry intermittently and sometimes seem inconsolable.

### Q What causes digestive discomfort<sup>2</sup>?

A Digestive discomfort can simply be a sign that your baby's sensitive and delicate tummy is still developing – that is why it is common. Many babies are not able to completely digest the important nutrients in formula because the enzymes that break them down are not yet fully active. This causes digestive discomfort.

### Q How common is this condition?

A It's very common. About 50 percent of babies experience digestive discomfort during their first year<sup>#</sup>. Although it is usually not serious, it is a good idea to seek a solution.

### Q Will my baby outgrow it?

A Over time most children will outgrow their digestive discomfort<sup>2</sup>. It simply takes time for the delicate tummy of a child and his digestive system to develop. Some babies begin to feel better after 6 months, while others can take a year.

### Q How can I help my baby feel better?

A Sometimes you can help by changing the way you feed your baby. Here are a few techniques to try:

- Burp him by patting gently from the lower back, moving upwards, after every approx. 60 to 90ml (2 to 3 fl oz).
- Gently massage his stomach.
- Feed him smaller amounts.
- Calm a hungry or crying baby to prevent him from gulping air.



### Q What is a partially hydrolyzed protein (PHP) formula? Is it easy for baby to digest it?

A A PHP formula contains proteins that are broken down into smaller pieces, making it easy for a developing digestive system to digest. Your baby's delicate and sensitive tummy will not have to work so hard to break down these smaller proteins' pieces.

Article courtesy of Mead Johnson

Sources:

<sup>#</sup>MJN Habits and Practices study 2015. n=2319 Stage 2 and 3 children in 6 markets in Asia.

<sup>1</sup>Misselwitz et al, United European Gastroenterology Journal 2013

<sup>2</sup>Kim K. et al, Korean J. Food Sci. Ani. Resour. 2011



# A Caregiver's Advice on Knowing When to Seek Help



Caring for a loved one with chronic conditions involves both physical and mental challenges. A family caregiver shares how patients and caregivers may benefit from having additional support from professionals.

The role of a family caregiver is not one many expect to play. It's hard to anticipate when a loved one might fall ill and develop a chronic condition that requires long-term care. As a family caregiver, you can take on multiple roles – from aiding with daily activities like dressing, feeding and bathing to coordinating medical appointments and medication administration in addition to staying on top of your finances all at once. The responsibilities and demands on this role can be hugely challenging and may potentially put you at the risk of developing depression, anxiety and burnout over a long period of time.

Christine, 58, has been caring for her husband David (61), who is a heart & diabetic patient. David was diagnosed with colorectal cancer in January 2019. Soon after, he underwent a surgical procedure to have 18-cm of his colon removed together with a 4-cm tumour and 16 of the lymph nodes – three of which were diagnosed with stage IIIB cancer. This resulted in another 11 months of him being put on a temporary stoma – a surgically created opening of an intestine for the purpose of discharging body waste. Due to David's existing heart and diabetic condition, the family was told that it would be a high-risk procedure, which could potentially result in death.

"We were confused, frightened, devastated, shocked and in denial as there wasn't any family history of colorectal cancer," said Christine.

Although the diagnosis of colorectal cancer came as a shock, David's no stranger to medical procedures. In addition to having

received angioplasty in 2005, David found out that he had severe stenosis in 2018. This required him to undergo 6 months of radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Three months later, the doctor discovered another cancerous tumour in his liver which had begun to spread, hence requiring him to undergo radiofrequency ablation.

Dealing with multiple chronic conditions has not been easy for the couple, who have been married for 32 years now. As they continue to face this emotional journey one day at a time, they found solace in their Christian faith and the support from their church community.

In August 2020, an elderly friend told them about Aviva's Patient Support Programme – a healthcare management concierge service for Aviva's MyShield and MyHealthPlus policyholders who are managing chronic conditions. The programme offers holistic support to kickstart the post-treatment recovery journey for up to 12 months, which includes guidance and training on preventive care, nutrition, stress management and assistance to seek financial aid where necessary.

In collaboration with Aviva's home care service provider, each plan is carefully designed to suit the unique healthcare needs of each patient and to aid throughout the post-treatment recovery journey. "Ramona, Aviva's Clinical Case Manager, recommended counselling and a nutrition programme which I fully agree that David may benefit from as he is still anxious and concerned about the bowel movements and abdominal pain. David had a Zoom counselling session once and

he has not been able to keep his subsequent appointment due to his lethargy after chemotherapy treatments. Ramona was very patient, friendly, understanding and didn't make me feel stressed. She listened to my concerns attentively and encouraged me. It warms my heart that she texted me every now and then to find out how we are coping. Ramona went through great length to link me to Ling Ling who is a nurse coordinator from one of the Aviva's home care service providers."

Being on the programme means having a dedicated partner by your side to help manage the illness more effectively and ensure the patient receives optimal support that will promote recovery and enhance quality of life.

If there's one advice Christine can give to other patients and caregivers in a similar situation, she said, "Accept the help that is available. Do not think "it may not help" because you'll be surprised by how much of your burdens would be lightened."

**Visit Aviva Patient Support Programme to find out more or give us a call at +65 6827 9933.**

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Information is accurate as at 01 Jan 2021. Protected up to specified limits by SDIC.

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# At 60

by Anthony Goh

On my 83rd birthday, I was asked what I could remember of being 60. It so happens that turning 60 was a turning-point in my life that brought with it unimaginable joy and renewed vitality.

## NOT YOUNG, NOT YET OLD

At 60, I could still do many of the things I used to do when I was younger, including daily brisk walks and workouts at the open public gym. Though my hair was thinning, and I was not quite as mentally sharp or steady on my feet as I used to be, it never once occurred to me that I was 'old'.

During my sixtieth year, due to a change in my family circumstances, a newborn baby came into my life. Holding this precious little girl was like holding the world in my arms. It was as if all the dormant forces, faculties and talents inside of me had been awoken. As I vowed to look after 'my little world' for another 40 years or more, God willing, I discovered a new, improved version of myself.

With a new life to care for, I stepped up my efforts with the self-care practices that I follow to this day. I continue to walk for several kilometres every day, follow a balanced Mediterranean diet, and read voraciously to keep my mind sharp and curious.

Now, at the age of 83, I am lucky to say that my body is free from pain and chronic illness.

## A MIXED BLESSING

No matter how much I take charge of my own mental and physical health, I am well aware that I exert scant influence over the attitudes of society.

Throughout my senior years, there have been times when I felt that I had been dismissed as irrelevant due to my age. Having amassed a wealth of experience in the business world, in senior management roles across a wide range of industries, my efforts to obtain part-time work in retirement were largely unsuccessful. Philosophically, I accepted the silence, as we are all men and women of one season. I had enjoyed my moment in the sun, I told myself, so I shouldn't expect too much more.

That said, attitudes are changing here in Singapore, thanks largely to the efforts of our Government. To keep pace with lengthening lifespans, the retirement age has been changed from 55 to 67 years old. Initiatives such as SkillsFuture, to reskill elderly workers and help us familiarise ourselves with the digital world, have been introduced. I urge my compatriots to make full use of them.

On the bright side, I am no longer a slave to the corporate world. I am able to set my own pace, and enjoy the luxury of being able to stop and smell the roses. I use my spare time for self-reflection, self-guided learning with the resources of the Internet, reading, volunteering, and contributing

**As someone who's 'been there, done that', to anyone approaching their 60th birthday, I would say – embrace active ageing, not passive ageing.**

to this very magazine. I gratefully acknowledge the times when I am shown kindness by youngsters who address me as 'Uncle' and offer up their seat to me on public transport.

For sure, growing old has its perks.

## A MESSAGE FOR THOSE TURNING 60

As someone who's 'been there, done that', to anyone approaching their 60th birthday, I would say – embrace active ageing, not passive ageing.

You can add years to your life by making healthy lifestyle choices. It is not just a matter of physical fitness but also of mental fitness. Have some quiet time while walking or resting. Be grateful and remember those who have helped you in life. Stay abreast of current affairs and, better still, contribute your insights and opinions to help make the environment and the world we live in a better place for current and future generations. Most importantly, be adaptable and resilient. Yes, you may fall ill, but your body is a marvellous machine that can repair and recover from most ailments and injuries with the help of medical professionals.

Remember, 60 is just a number. How you define yourself, and the sum total of your actions, override it.



*The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.*





# Building Resilience

These trying times have triggered a mental health crisis worldwide. Charley Joyce, Senior Counsellor, Clarity Singapore Pte Ltd, shares insights into ways in which we can build our resilience.

## WHAT EXACTLY IS RESILIENCE?

Charley describes mental and emotional resilience as the ability to adapt and move forward in a constructive way when faced with adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. In other words, it is the ability to bounce back from difficult experiences.

**Fun fact:** the word 'resilience' comes from the Latin word 'resilio' which means 'to bounce back' or 'retaliate'.

## QUALITIES OF A RESILIENT PERSON

Charley shared some common characteristics of resilient people.

### Physical Elements

Physical strength, energy and vitality are often seen in resilient people. If you are physically healthy, you are more likely to be able to cope and adapt in stressful situations.

### Mental or Psychological Elements

These include factors like mental flexibility, emotional self-regulation, adjustability, focus, self-awareness, and the ability to express oneself clearly and think rationally.

### Emotional Awareness

People who recognise and understand their own emotions and those of others tend to be able to regulate their feelings and switch to rational problem-solving mode in times of crisis.

### A Sense of Humour

Having a sense of humour is a great asset. Seeing the funny side of a stressful situation can trigger a shift in perspective that transforms a threat into a challenge.

### A Positive Attitude to Mistakes

Allocating a constructive meaning to failures and mistakes is a powerful way to build resilience. You must tell yourself –

I have failed, yet I am not a failure. Charley cites this inspiring quote from Nelson Mandela: "The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

### Social Elements

Resilient people tend to have strong interpersonal relationships with family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and the community. They are generally comfortable with asserting themselves and setting healthy boundaries when necessary, as well as expressing themselves and reaching out to ask for help when stressful situations arise.

### Spirituality

Spirituality can be an anchor that provides relief and sense of control in grim and seemingly hopeless situations. Anguish itself can be a catalyst to deepen spiritual and religious practices and beliefs, which can result in a positive coping mechanism that brings personal growth, peace and above all hope to people.

In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared, "For many people, religion, personal beliefs and spirituality are a source of comfort, wellbeing, security, meaning, sense of belonging, purpose and strength."

### COPING WITH COVID-19

Though everyone has been affected by the pandemic in some way, Charley singled out three at-risk groups who are likely to have been more adversely affected than others.

### Victims of Domestic Violence

People are told to stay home, but for victims and survivors of domestic violence, including children, staying home is not a place of refuge, but a case of being trapped with their abusers. Children are especially vulnerable. The increased stress levels among parents can be a trigger for physical abuse and neglect of children.

### Older People

According to WHO data from April 2020, more than 95 percent of COVID-19 deaths were among people over 60 years of age. While protecting older people from the virus, the isolation of quarantine heightens their risk of loneliness.

**"For many people, religion, personal beliefs and spirituality are a source of comfort, wellbeing, security, meaning, sense of belonging, purpose and strength".**

*World Health Organization*

### People with Pre-existing Physical or Mental Illness

The pandemic can be especially challenging for people with a pre-existing physical or mental illness, as well as those whose circumstances make it difficult to adapt to changes. Dr Hans Kluge, director of WHO Europe, told a press briefing in January 2021 that it is taking its toll, both on those who were already at risk, as well as on those who have never sought mental health support before.

Extensive public health updates and continuous media coverage on the pandemic can trigger panic attacks in people who are already struggling with anxiety and experiencing obsessions and

intrusive thoughts relating to contamination or spreading disease. Furthermore, their daily routines are likely to have been disrupted, and they may no longer have access to support networks such as face-to-face counselling sessions, meeting friends or attending support groups. All of these factors make them especially vulnerable to crises and relapses.

### COPING STRATEGIES

Tick the boxes in Charley's checklist for building your personal resources for coping with adverse situations, from global pandemics to personal crises.

#### ☒ Accept Change

By accepting and letting go of the things you cannot change, you are in a better position to focus on the things that you can. This will help you feel more in control of your life at a time when so much is beyond our control.

#### ☒ Set Goals

Set short- and long-term goals and focus on attaining them. From exercising daily to planning a home renovation, goals can help you stop obsessing over the pandemic and other problems, and focus on a brighter future.

#### ☒ Find Meaning

Reflect on what gives your life meaning and makes you happy. It could be connecting with nature, supporting your family, pursuing an interest, or a cause you feel passionate about. Remind yourself of these things, often, and especially when you are feeling helpless or hopeless.

#### ☒ Stay Connected

Stay in touch with your social support network. Use everyone's new best friend, technology, to 'facetime', 'Zoom' or 'Skype' your family and friends.



✓ **Learn Something New**

Develop a learning spirit – pursue a new interest or acquire a new skill. Mastering something new will boost your confidence in your ability to cope with the challenges that life throws at you, both during and after the pandemic.

✓ **Practise Self-compassion**

Be kind to yourself. When you are upset, take time out to vent your frustrations or release your disappointment. Go for a walk or a run – it can help you process your thoughts. Once you are calm, reassess your options and open your mind to all of the possible positive outcomes of whatever situation is getting you down.



✓ **Practise Self-care**

Make good choices with regard to diet, exercise and sleep. Strengthen your mental health with mindfulness, spiritual practices, journaling, yoga or meditation. Avoid negative outlets, such as drugs, alcohol and other substances. This will help empower your body with the resources to cope with stress rather than succumb to it.

✓ **Remain Hopeful**

Maintain a hopeful and optimistic outlook, and remember that a difficult situation can be an opportunity for learning and personal growth. This will help you keep your emotions within the ‘window of tolerance’ so that you can rationalise your problems and find solutions.

**EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY**

While Charley admits that teletherapy was never the first choice among mental health practitioners before COVID-19, she champions the many ways in which technology has helped support mental health.

“Given the number of mental health apps and programmes online, and the platforms that doctors, counsellors, psychologists and social workers have been using to stay in touch with their patients, it may remain a viable option even after the pandemic ends,” said Charley.

**“In some circles, being vulnerable is seen as a weakness and there is an unspoken pressure to present oneself as someone that has it all figured out. If you pursue that ‘can-do ethos’ relentlessly, you could be setting yourself up for failure”.**

*Charley Joyce*

**DO NOT DEMAND TOO MUCH OF YOURSELF**

If it doesn’t destroy you, it makes you stronger. The old saying has been quoted often in recent times.

While Charley agreed that hanging on to that thought can be self-affirming and motivating, she pointed out that it can become a problem if you set such high standards for yourself that you feel you must put on an act and hide your fears rather than seek help when you are struggling.

“In some circles, being vulnerable is seen as a weakness and there is an unspoken pressure to present oneself as someone

that has it all figured out. If you pursue that ‘can-do ethos’ relentlessly, you could be setting yourself up for failure,” cautioned Charley.

According to Charley, studies show that surviving a stressful event outside the realm of normal human experiences can have serious long-term effects such as hypervigilance, hyperarousal, anxiety, panic attacks, and feeling overwhelmed.

“The truth is that chaos and mayhem make most people psychologically weaker, not stronger,” clarified Charley.

**AN AFFIRMATION OF OUR COMMON HUMANITY**

Surviving a crisis that is uniquely personal, such as a serious illness or injury from a freak accident, can lead to feelings of acute isolation. The pandemic, on the other hand, has been uniquely universal.

From all reports, a sense of camaraderie has arisen from the collective hardship that has brought the world together. This humbling experience has taught us that adversities can happen to any one of us – and to all of us.

“Collective thinking, caring and connection, and the sharing of resources, will bring the world out of chaos without destroying our spirits,” predicted Charley. “Positive things like unconditional love and care, and a nurturing environment that encourages people to explore, learn and adapt, will make us all stronger.”

You heard it from Charley. We will survive this pandemic. And we may emerge stronger, kinder and wiser for it.

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# Living Longer, Living Better

In the course of our 60-year journey, it has become apparent that the vast majority of people value their health and their relationships with loved ones above all else. To live our best lives for as long as we can, for both ourselves and the people we love, we asked three resident healthcare professionals for their advice on how we can actively plan to live longer and better.



### DR CHARIS KUM,

Resident Physician, Health Screening Centre

I like to tell my patients that health screening is an investment in your health. It is an effective avenue to screen for potential health issues, and get on top of them. We do not get to decide when our life ends, but we do get to decide the quality of it.

Please ensure that you do your screenings at recommended intervals, and discuss what diagnostic tests are required with your doctor.



### DR KUM'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR LIVING LONGER AND LIVING BETTER

- 1 Schedule regular opportunities for self-care.** This could be going for exercise classes, feeding yourself with high quality organic food or even making sure that you get enough sleep every night. Tending to your mental and emotional health reduces burnout and anxiety. You should also prioritise your physical health and schedule an annual health screening with your doctor for regular check-ins on your health status.
- 2 Choose nutrient-rich, colourful foods.** Studies have shown that the healthiest diets are plant-based (Mediterranean, flexitarian and so on), which involves choosing to eat nuts, legumes, fruits and vegetables over processed foods, red meats and so on. Eat colourful foods as they have many nutrients, vitamins and minerals. I would also encourage you to start looking at nutritional labels so that you know and understand what we are feeding our bodies. Often times, many foods branded as 'healthy' are not.

Please ensure that you do your screenings at recommended intervals, and discuss what diagnostic tests are required with your doctor.

- 3 Get on board with vaccinations.** For the regular adult, annual vaccines like influenza can reduce the severity of the disease. Other important vaccines are pneumococcal, MMR (mumps, measles and rubella), chicken pox and Hepatitis B. I would also encourage girls between the ages of 18 to 26 years old to get cervical cancer vaccines. Please see your doctor to assess your suitability for the various vaccines available.

- 4 Reframe and redefine exercise.** For most of us, engaging in exercise is somewhat rare as we are often too busy. I would encourage you to move a little bit, often. This can be as simple as taking the stairs at work, walking to lunch and stopping one or two bus or train stops before your intended stop and walking the rest of the way. This will combat the frequent excuse I hear – "I've no time for exercise, doctor." I encourage you to engage in at least 30 minutes of activity at least four or five times per week. If you track your steps/activity with a tracker (good for you!), you should aim for 10,000 steps per day.

- 5 Pick up a new skill.** This could be as simple as learning to cook (and prepare healthy meals for work lunches? Win-win!), setting aside time to meditate or do yoga, destressing while doing pottery, or even learning a new language. Challenging ourselves and stretching our capacity for learning will help keep us cognitively agile and combat dementia.

Health Screening Centre  
Mount Alvernia Hospital  
Tel: 6347 6215

### ADWIN'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR LIVING LONGER AND LIVING BETTER



### ADWIN HO,

Physiotherapist, Mount Alvernia Hospital Rehabilitation Centre

Regular exercise adds life to years and not just years to life. It improves aerobic capacity, strength, flexibility and balance. This works to increase cardiovascular fitness, build stronger bones, reduce cancer risk, control blood sugars, improve mental health and promote weight loss. All these benefits help to reduce the likelihood of being diagnosed with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol, which are precursors to serious health conditions like cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Regular exercise adds life to years and not just years to life. It improves aerobic capacity, strength, flexibility and balance.

If you face barriers that prevent you from taking part in an exercise programme, seek professional help. A physiotherapist can help identify your barriers to exercise and suggest ways to overcome them, build your confidence and set realistic fitness goals with you. The end result? A healthier and fitter life!

- 1 Start slow.** If this is your first time exercising in a long while and/or returning to exercise post injury, it is important to start at a level that is suitable for you and gradually work your way up. This prevents injuries from occurring and keeps you in optimum shape!
- 2 Be consistent.** Always plan your exercise routine and how it fits into your schedule! As the saying goes; if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Having a fixed exercise schedule not only helps to ensure you set aside time for exercise, it also helps to cultivate a habit!
- 3 Set realistic goals.** Aiming to run under 10 minutes for 2.4km in one month's time? Great! But if you have not run in years, it is very unlikely you will be able to achieve this timing. Setting realistic and attainable goals will keep you motivated!
- 4 Consult the doctor.** If you have any pre-existing health condition(s), i.e. cardiac, metabolic, musculoskeletal and so on, it is essential that you seek your doctor's advice before you start getting more active to ensure you are fit to take part in any physical activity.
- 5 Enjoy your exercise.** Last but not least, always find an exercise programme or a sport that you enjoy! It also helps if you can find an exercise buddy who can embark on this fitness journey with you. This will keep you going for the long term!

Rehabilitation Centre  
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**ROSE GOH,**  
Senior Manager, Clinical Pastoral Care,  
Mount Alvernia Hospital

To be truly healthy, you must focus on the five dimensions of the human person – mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and social. Whenever one dimension is neglected, the overall health of a person is affected.

To embrace a healthier lifestyle, a well-balanced and holistic approach is integral. I urge you to take positive steps towards enhancing your mental and emotional health, so that you can look forward to living longer and living better.



To be truly healthy,  
you must focus on  
the five dimensions  
of the human person  
– mental, emotional,  
spiritual, physical  
and social.

**ROSE'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR LIVING  
LONGER AND LIVING BETTER**

- 1 Positive Thinking** – According to research from the University of Southern California, the mind thinks an average of 70,000 thoughts a day and most of the thoughts are repetitive. An increased awareness of what goes inside our minds and our thinking patterns allows us to be proactive in channeling our thoughts towards what is beneficial for our well-being.
- 2 Embrace Trusted Relationships** – Building and strengthening fulfilling relationships with family and friends allow us to form a support network to share our joys and challenges in life.
- 3 Active Living** – Exercise is a great tool for stress management and mood lifting. There are different forms of exercises catering to individual preferences. Regular exercise work wonders for our emotional and mental wellbeing.
- 4 Continual Learning** – Keeping our minds active with lifelong learning is a great way to boost our self-esteem and confidence. It also aids us in our personal and spiritual growth.
- 5 Enjoy “Me Time”** – Having our own personal space to acknowledge the importance of self allows us to get in touch with our innermost being. It enables us to be attuned to ourselves and prioritise what matters most.

The above five tips reflect one of our core values of being committed to building life-giving relationships with all, which is PEACE!

Clinical Pastoral Care  
Mount Alvernia Hospital  
Tel: 6347 6688

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