

Photography Appreciation Workshop, capturing #PSORFREE moments

by Michelle Teo

Photography is the only language that can be understood everywhere in the world. It transcends boundaries and carries depth. On 23rd May 2015, LEO Pharma organized a Photography Appreciation Workshop for PAS members. Avid travel photography, Nandakumar Narasimhan from Phocus Academy was invited to teach members the basics in photo appreciation; from the lighting and framing to training our eye to see better photographs.



PAS member taking down notes from the expert



PAS members seeking advice from the expert

The workshop touched on several photography topics:

- i) Variables in photography: What does photography and striking a jackpot have in common?

In photography, it is sometimes a matter of being at the right place and the right time to capture a good picture. There're several golden rules to follow that confers the best natural lighting, such as: 2hrs before sunset and 2hrs after sunrise to gives the best natural light and captures the best expression of the subject.

In addition to these golden timing, there are several timing pockets that best capture 'blue sky'. This timing varies along the year and for different countries.

- ii) How does lighting make or break a photo?

In photography, natural light is always the best. Even in indoor photography, we should avoid flash and use natural light as far as possible. One quick tip is to take photos near the window. In addition, the angle of light hitting the face and eyes also plays a big role in making the photo more dramatic.

- iii) Choosing your camera

Nanda recommends making the best with what one has. DSLR cameras are the fastest of all but is often too bulky and heavy to carry around. An alternative to the DSLR camera is the mirrorless camera (M43), as it is lighter and allows for the lens to be changed. However, they're less weather resistant. As for compact point and shoot? For compact point and shoot, Nanda recommends using camera phone.

- iv) Composition techniques

There're 3 golden rules to a good composition:

✓ **Content:** Cleaning up the mess. Include only the necessary and don't try to capture everything.

✓ **Framing:** We usually do not need the entire visual to know what is happening, however, we should not crop pictures abruptly (such as between joints!). In framing, there is a 'rule of thirds' which says to not smack subjects right in the middle.

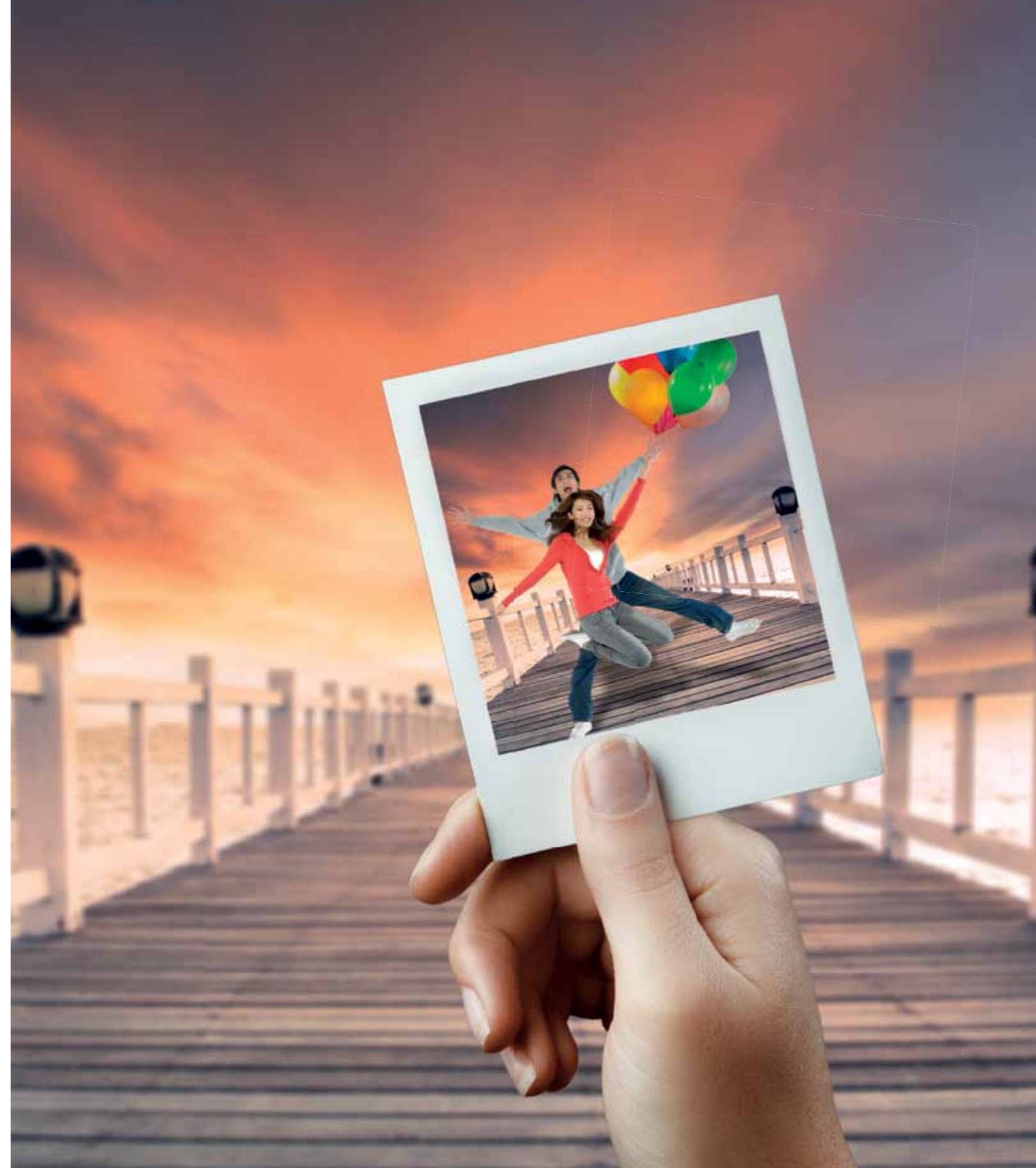
✓ **Background:** Ideally, background should be in a single colour for subjects to stand out better. One also needs to take care to ensure the subject does not blend into the background.

It was a fruitful and interactive session as participants had the chance to ask the expert on photography essentials and importantly, everyone learnt that it doesn't take a professional to take a good photograph. Photographs tell a story and capture precious moments. Psoriasis should not limit one from living out and capturing these precious #PSORFREE moments.

"What I like about photographs is that they capture a moment that's gone forever, impossible to reproduce" - Karl Lagerfeld



Putting learning into practice at the photo booth



Helping people living with psoriasis.



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President's Message

The World Psoriasis Day is around the corner again and this year, we will be commemorating the event with a public education display on psoriasis at the Ang Mo Kio Central stage on 24 October 2015. This is to reach out to the public to raise awareness and educate them about psoriasis.



The World Psoriasis Day was first inaugurated in Oct 2004 and so this year, the event will be into its 11th year. The event is organized under the umbrella of IFPA (International Federation of Psoriasis Association), of which the Psoriasis Association of Singapore is a member. Currently, there are 51 countries who have joined IFPA. Through the WPD events, patient organizations all over the world have been able to raised psoriasis awareness in their own country. These efforts have not gone unnoticed, with the World Health organization recognising psoriasis as a serious chronic non-communicable disease last year.

We hope that you will continue to support our World Psoriasis Day event as this is critical for the success of the event. There will also be educational talks on psoriasis and performances during the event. So do look out for more details about World Psoriasis Day and join us in raising psoriasis awareness in Singapore!

God bless.

Colin Theng

ATTENTION

World Psoriasis Day

Date: 24th October 2015
(Saturday)

Time: 1pm – 5pm

Venue: Ang Mo Kio
Central Stage

Guest of Honour –
Dr Lam Pin Min
(Member of Parliament)

Keep your day free and
come celebrate with us!

Understanding Basic Health Insurance & Medical Assistance Schemes in Singapore

Date: 22nd Aug 2015 (Saturday)

Time: 10.00am to 12.30pm

Venue: National Skin Centre, Auditorium 5th Level

How much do you understand about Health Insurance schemes and medical assistance schemes in Singapore?

We invited a speaker from the Institute of Financial Literacy (MoneySense) to share an overview of the Health Insurance schemes, its benefits and the impact on our members.

A dermatologist, Dr Yew Yik Weng, from National Skin Centre, will be giving a talk on the various medical assistance schemes available in Singapore.

Please sms 9005 8264 or go online to Psoriasis.org.sg to register

Lunch will be provided. Special thanks to Abbvie Pte Ltd for sponsoring lunch.

PSORIASIS IN FOCUS by John Koh

On 25th April, 2015, I attended the Focus Group talks given by Dr. Colin Theng, President of PAS and senior dermatologist of NSC, and Dr. Koh Hong Yi, a consultant dermatologist at SGH. The session turned out to be more interesting than expected as both doctors went in depth into the subject, and shared new developments in the treatment of psoriasis.

Dr. Colin Theng started with a not so optimistic look at psoriasis. He shared that it was found that psoriasis patients have a higher incidence of obesity, ischaemic heart disease and diabetes than those without psoriasis. He opined that studies, though not conclusive, seem to point to some genetic causes, and cautioned psoriasis sufferers to be careful about their lifestyle choices to minimize the chance of getting these conditions. He went on to discuss about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, and the various treatment options for them.

He also touched on scalp psoriasis and specific treatments for it. Using plastic wrap or a swimming cap over medication on the scalp, called occlusion, will allow the medication to be better absorbed and therefore work more effectively. However, it can cause thinning of the skin and therefore should be used only when necessary.

At the end of his presentation, Dr. Theng talked about past, present and future treatments for the disease. He explained why certain treatments were given at certain stages, as well as the reversibility of such treatments. He was very candid when explaining the side effects of treatments. He shared his experience with treatment using ultraviolet light and PUVA which combines UV light and emollient bath. Long term PUVA treatment may result in skin cancers. There were discussions about fumaric acid esters which is available in Germany but not in Singapore. He also informed the audience that at least 4 additional drugs will be approved for use in treating psoriasis in the near future.

The next speaker, Dr. Koh Hong Yi, focused on two main topics, nail psoriasis and ‘adherence’ to treatments. He tested the audience’s knowledge on the functions of finger and toe nails. It was funny as the audience did not know all the answers. He then went on to explain how we can take better care of our nails, and how to apply topical cream medication on them. Patients can also choose localized injections at affected areas. This is however a painful treatment. Dr. Koh was clear and detailed in his presentation. He explained that as nails take time to grow, treating nails can be a lengthy process. He emphasized that patients should not traumatize their nails

by using them as “tools”, such as opening cans with them.

What Dr. Koh meant by ‘adherence’ is similar to what we normally call ‘compliance’. The difference is that in ‘compliance’, we would normally be fined or have to pay a predetermined penalty if we flout it. Hence, using the word ‘adherence’ for doctors’ prescription to patients is more appropriate, although the patients will still suffer consequences if they do not follow their doctors’ prescriptions. He gave many reasons why a large percentage of patients do not follow prescriptions, such as instructions being too complicated, expensive, troublesome, and so on.

Dr. Koh explained that doctors, while partially responsible, should improve on giving prescriptions that suit the patients’ needs and lifestyles. Patients, on the other hand, need to understand that they cannot get better if they do not follow their doctors’ prescriptions. A lot of unnecessary misunderstanding on the efficacy of prescribed treatments and frustrations can be avoided if both parties work together to arrive at an acceptable regime for treatment.

After the talks, the audience were divided into 2 groups for discussions with the doctors. During the half hour of interaction with these doctors, there were a lot of interesting anecdotes and discussions about alternative medicines e.g. the use of Lingzi and other Chinese herbs, and treatment at the Dead Sea. The participants were very happy to be able to spend so much time with the doctors to understand their respective conditions better.

At the end of the program, the MC gave a short summary of future planned activities of the association, and announced the waiver of members’ annual membership fees if they attend at least 4 of the events. This was followed by a nice lunch buffet sponsored by LEO Pharma.

Everyone went home with a goody bag sponsored by Ego Pharmaceutical.

It was a very successful and informative event.



Strategies to Improve Adherence to Treatment in Psoriasis by Dr Eugene Tan

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory disease which generally requires long term treatment for maintenance and to manage acute flares. Adherence is a major problem in psoriasis, due to a plethora of factors. A study in the United States revealed that nearly 50% of prescriptions are not filled by patients with psoriasis. Among those who fill their prescriptions, up to 70% do not use their medications as prescribed.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines adherence as the extent to which a person’s behaviour corresponds with agreed recommendations from a healthcare provider. These behaviours include taking medication, following a diet or executing lifestyle changes. Adherence should be distinguished from compliance; ‘adherence’ relies on shared medical decision making based upon a good healthcare provider–patient relationship, whereas ‘compliance’ implies more of an authoritative and paternalistic approach from the healthcare provider.

A report published in the Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology identified the top four factors for non-adherence as the following:

1. Complex treatment plan
2. Poor cosmetic acceptability
3. Lack of treatment efficacy
4. Poor doctor-patient communication

Rising healthcare cost is another major factor that contributes to non-adherence to treatment. On the flip-side, non-adherence itself raises direct costs for the patient in terms of more frequent doctor visits and more treatments and/or investigations due to worsening of psoriasis. Indirectly, there is also loss of productive work time and potentially loss of income.

Clearly, non-adherence is a major issue in psoriasis that should be addressed. There are some strategies that can be employed to improve adherence to treatment.



(1) Human Strategies

To improve adherence, it is crucial for healthcare providers such as doctors and nurses to build a relationship of trust with their patients. This can be achieved by practising good communication skills such as active listening, appropriate body language to match the tone of the consultation, and showing empathy and genuine concern. Where applicable, enlist family members’ support to encourage the patient in

maintaining adherence to treatment. For instance, it will be helpful if a family member can help the patient to apply topical treatment to difficult-to-reach sites such as the back.

While there is no permanent cure for psoriasis, the disease can be improved and successfully controlled to varying degrees with effective treatment. Patients should feel optimistic about their treatment goals, and at the same time be realistic in their expectations of the outcome.

(2) Treatment Strategies

Surveys have shown that the majority of patients prefer topical therapy that is less greasy, fast-absorbing and non-staining. Most also preferred a low frequency of application, such as once daily. Therefore, gels and creams tend to be more popular than ointments, though there are patients with very dry skin who may derive greater benefit from ointments. To promote adherence, it is important to consider the patient’s preference for specific treatment vehicles such as lotions, gels, creams, or ointments.

In addition, we should move towards simplification of treatment regimens, and aim to strike the right balance between therapeutic safety and efficacy to achieve an optimal outcome.

(3) System Strategies

As psoriasis is a chronic and recurrent disease requiring systematic treatment, it is imperative for patients to be educated about the disease, its triggers and associated complications. Patients with poor understanding of their disease are more likely to be non-adherent. Needy patients who require financial assistance for their treatment can seek help from medical social workers in public healthcare institutions. Plans are in the pipeline to allow the use of Medisave to alleviate the financial burden of treating psoriasis.

We live in an era where information technology is becoming increasingly interwoven into our daily lives. Nowadays, there are useful smartphone and internet-based ‘adherence’ that can generate daily reminders for us to take medications or apply our topical treatments on time, churn out weekly adherence reports to keep us on the right track, and automatically inform our family members if adherence is poor.

In conclusion, treatment adherence is a significant issue in psoriasis and there is much that we can do to improve adherence. Both healthcare providers and patients are responsible for promoting a culture of adherence, which will go a long way in improving psoriasis management.

Novartis Singapore raises funds for the Psoriasis Association of Singapore via a cycling challenge to support patient group activities

On 6th May 2015, as part of the Dermatological Society of Singapore and Novartis Singapore Continual Medical Education (CME) programme, Novartis Singapore held a cycling challenge activity to raise funds for the Psoriasis Association of Singapore (PAS). The fund is to support the monthly activities organized by PAS to equip patients with the skills and knowledge to cope with Psoriasis.

Healthcare professionals participated in this “Clear skin cycling challenge”. Much support was received from the members of the dermatology profession and the Dermatological Society of Singapore. (See photos below)



The objective was to hit PASI 90 by week 16 (16 secs) and sustain to week 52 (52 secs). For every 1 patient that they helped to “achieve” PASI 90, Novartis donated SGD 40 to PAS. The cycling event run from 6:15pm to 7pm with 2 bicycles being made available. At the end of the event, Novartis Singapore committed SGD 4,000 to PAS.



Cheque presentation from Novartis Singapore to Psoriasis Association of Singapore

(From Left to Right): Dr Koh Hong Yi, Associate Consultant and Committee member, Psoriasis Association of Singapore, Dr Joshi Venugopal, Managing Director and CPO Head, Singapore & Asian Emerging Markets, Novartis and Sister Tan Yoke Choo, committee member, Psoriasis Association of Singapore.



Dr Koh Hong Yi also presented about the activities of the Psoriasis Association of Singapore to all the healthcare professionals in attendance.



Novartis Singapore also shared its commitment in dermatology.