

## Manchester Shout Out by Ray Chua

Professor Christopher EM Griffiths from the University of Manchester extended an invitation to Psoriasis Association of Singapore to participate in their annual Manchester Shoutout to promote Psoriasis Awareness.

A group of our patients, NSC staff and Dr Colin Theng got together to submit our contribution to the awareness campaign.

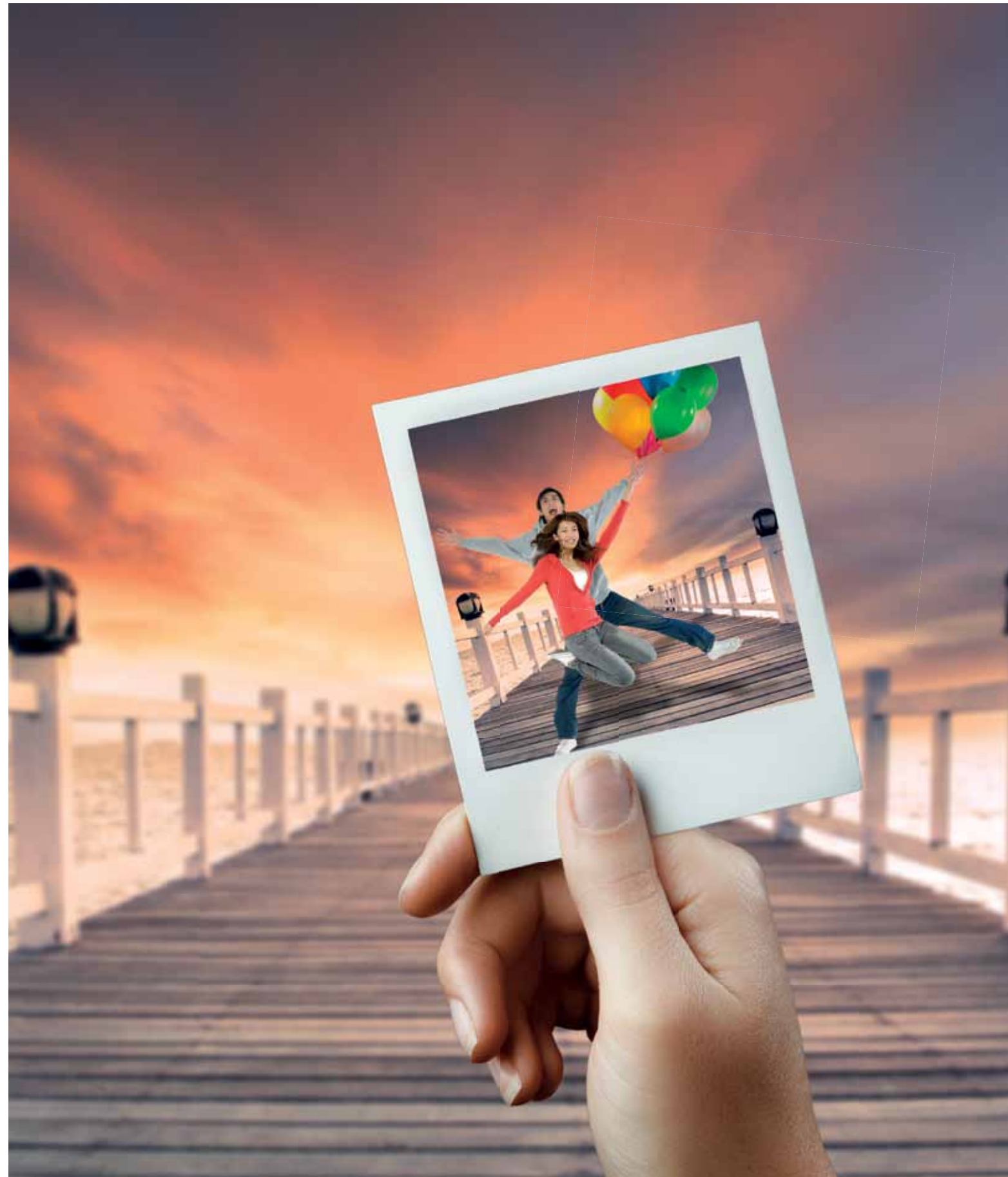


"I joined the Manchester Shoutout Dance organized by this association and I had so much fun.

I am looking forward to joining more programs and meeting new friends"

- Christine Chandran

We look forward to greater participation from patients for our future events!



Helping *people* living with psoriasis.



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#DiscoverThePsoriasis

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THE PSORIASIS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

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### President's Message

In the recent WHO Global report on Psoriasis, there were many recommendations made, including a call for policy makers to improve access to care and calling for greater advocacy work by patient organizations. The Psoriasis Association of Singapore has been regularly carrying out activities to raise the awareness of psoriasis in Singapore such as holding road shows, contributing to news articles and conducting education forums for psoriasis patients. While I do think that the awareness of psoriasis in Singapore has been increasing over the years, I feel that many people in Singapore still have not heard about psoriasis.

Raising awareness of psoriasis has to be something that we do continually to reach out to those who have not heard of psoriasis and to re-educate those who have heard about it. For those with psoriasis, sharing with your friends and loved ones around is a good way to educate them about psoriasis. A patient advocate once told me that when he first had psoriasis, he was miserable and was constantly hiding from the public, fearing to be noticed because of his extensive psoriasis. This made him more stressed and depressed. However, when he changed his mind-set and decided to stop hiding and be open and share about his psoriasis with his friends, he felt much more relieved and happier and was also surprised by the acceptance from most of the people whom he had shared with about the disease.

The PAS will continue in its efforts in patient advocacy and raising psoriasis awareness in Singapore. I hope that each one of you will continue to join us in our efforts.

God bless.

*Colin Theng*

### Look out for detail:

**World Psoriasis Day**

22 October 2016, Saturday  
12.30pm - 5.00pm  
Sheraton Towers  
Buffet lunch and door gifts  
Theme : Family Day

## Report on 2016 AGM by Valerie Poh, PAS Secretary

The 34th Annual General Meeting of PAS was held on 26th May 2016 at the NSC auditorium.



Before the AGM, Dr. Theng (President), Janice Tay and Jerome Tok (committee members) spoke to those present about "What's New in Psoriasis", "Peer Support Group" and "Smartphone Usage" respectively.



Dr. Theng updated the members on the latest in research and biologics, including the various options in the market and their effectiveness. He also educated them on the PASI measurement. He then touched on other measures which might help in psoriasis management as well as "metabolic syndrome" and psoriasis.

Janice spoke on the "Peer Support Group" and its activities to date, and invited everyone present to join in the activities organized for them.



Jerome enlightened the less IT-savvy of us on Battery Saving Tips for smartphone users. The tips included:

1. Charging your battery correctly
2. Closing unnecessary apps
3. Turn off WiFi and Bluetooth when not downloading big files, and when you leave the house unless using a Bluetooth headset
4. Improve phone security to ensure no virus or malware attack your phone and data
5. Store in cool areas instead of sunny, humid conditions as a heated phone drains battery and can reduce your smartphone's lifespan
6. Back up your smartphone data and reset it twice a month to do a clean-up of your phone

Dr. Theng then shared a video on last year's "Manchester Shoutout" and informed us that this year, Professor Griffiths from the Manchester Psoriasis Association invited us to join in the upcoming

"Shoutout". He hopes we will be able to produce a short video clip to send to Manchester.



The AGM began with a warm welcome to those present. The appointment of office-bearers went smoothly with 3 members, Hasina, Ashok Kumar and Franky Yap, volunteering to join the Committee. Once again, Dr. Colin Theng was voted in as our President and Mr. Wong Foot Keng as Vice-President.

The AGM ended with lunch courtesy of Leo Pharma and distribution of door gifts from Ego.



## Peer Support Group by Janice Tay E Chinn

I remember vividly the day when the doctor at NSC confirmed that I was suffering from the 'horrifying' skin disease called psoriasis. I was completely devastated and broke down. Mum was by my side. Then, at the age of 30, it felt like a death sentence. Thoughts of no more swimming at the pool or the beach, no more wearing sleeveless tops or shorts, not even a knee length skirt, led me into great despair. What is psoriasis and who will get it? Why do I get this skin disease when I have always taken more than enough fruits and vegetables? The doctor said there is no cure to it. It sounded like cancer. I thought to myself, "So, this is the end of my life. This is worse than cancer." The words "psoriasis CAN be CONTROLLED" did not register at all. All I sensed was hopelessness.

Fast forward, this is my eleventh year as a psoriasis patient. I am still alive, and friends and relatives tell me that I appear as normal as anyone without psoriasis. Of course, I do have red dots and plaques here and there if you observe me close enough.

Indeed, I never know how strong I can be until being strong was the only choice I had. When life knocks you down, you just roll over and look up at the stars. Like a glow stick, sometimes we need to break before we shine. It has not been an easy journey, but tough times don't last, tough people do. Psoriasis has given me life lessons and taught me how to love myself. My very first big lesson was to face the disease, clear my ignorance by reading up about the facts of the disease. I also asked my doctors and nurses. Surprisingly, the fear in me started to subside.

By acknowledging and admitting that I am having this condition and then learning to come to term with this illness, allows me to explore all ways possible to improve my life. I consistently learn and update myself with information about the disease and keep reminding myself to "accept yourself for who you are". These enables me to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Together with a few other psoriasis patients, we have come together to form the Psoriasis Peer Group, in order to provide all new and old psoriasis patients a platform to share experiences and knowledge. The group has a very supportive committee that is made up of doctors, nurses and patients, together with a very experienced medical counsellor, Mr. Lawrence Tan. In the group, we are able to get affirmations from fellow patients, to come together to share our stories, encourage one another and to know that we are NOT ALONE. From the discussions, we see many patients transform their mind-set from a negative to a positive one.

Mr. Lawrence Tan helps us identify our stressors and the triggers of our illness, psoriasis. He also enlightens us with good methods to cope with our stress. One very interesting way for measurement of our stress level is the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, whereby the total score will give you a rough estimate of how your current stress level is affecting your health. I keep a copy of this in my diary to consistently keep my own stress level in check. We also do case studies of distraught and angry high flyers who suffers from psoriasis and who engage in self-destructive behaviour resulting in loss of control over their life. We also learnt from real life examples of how bad the consequences can become if we continue a vicious cycle of self-blaming and self-denial.

We learn about the predisposing and aggravating factors of psoriasis e.g. stress, illness, medications and even scratching. We also learn to identify treatment goals and how to deal with psycho-social issues like Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS), using cognitive therapy and various other methods.

A change from a negative to a positive mind-set is crucial to cultivating good habits. This process requires patience. We must stop blaming ourselves for problems that were not within our controls and refrain from using unhealthy methods to escape stress. One should replace bad habits with good ones like meditation, jogging, volunteering or even taking walks with friends. It is certainly helpful to join a support group where like-minded people provide support for one another.

Ultimately, the greatest healing therapy is friendship and love. The peer support group is indeed the place for all psoriasis patients. I urge all members to join the Peer support Group. We will be discussing topics like "Understanding and Managing the Psycho-social Effects of Psoriasis" and "Celebrating the Triads of Friendship". For registration, kindly contact us at 9005 8264. The next meeting will be on 20th August from 12 noon to 2pm at National Skin Centre Level 5.

