

Chinese New Year 2015 (Year of the Goat) Celebrations by Ray Chua

The year 2015 is the Chinese zodiac year of the Goat. To commemorate this highly celebrated festivity, Psoriasis Association of Singapore, in conjunction with Leo Pharma, organized a special Lo Hei Chinese New Year lunch for members of the association.

This year's annual lunch was held at Shin Ju Japanese restaurant at UE Square and a total of 60 people turned up to usher in the New Year.

Our members were treated to a sumptuous spread of Japanese delicacies. We all had our fill of fresh sushi, sashimi and ala carte Japanese dishes. It was certainly an event that was memorable and satisfying!

Of course, we also had the traditional "Lo Hei" and wished all our members good health, abundant wealth and psoriasis remission for all patients!

During the event, our President, Dr. Colin Theng handed out the needy fund vouchers to our needy members as our token of support to encourage them through their journey with the chronic disease.

Overall, it was a well planned and enjoyable event. We would like to thank all our members for celebrating with us and Leo Pharma for kindly sponsoring the event.

2015 is a new year of hope for all of us in the Psoriasis Association of Singapore, where we will continue to support our members in their fight with the disease and to promote awareness of psoriasis to the public.

The Psoriasis Association of Singapore wishes all of you a fantastic new year and the Association looks forward to seeing you at our next event!



PAS members enjoying their 'Lo-hei'



Dr Colin Theng & Sister Tan with a recipient of the PAS support fund



PAS members having a good catch up over japanese lunch buffet



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President's Message

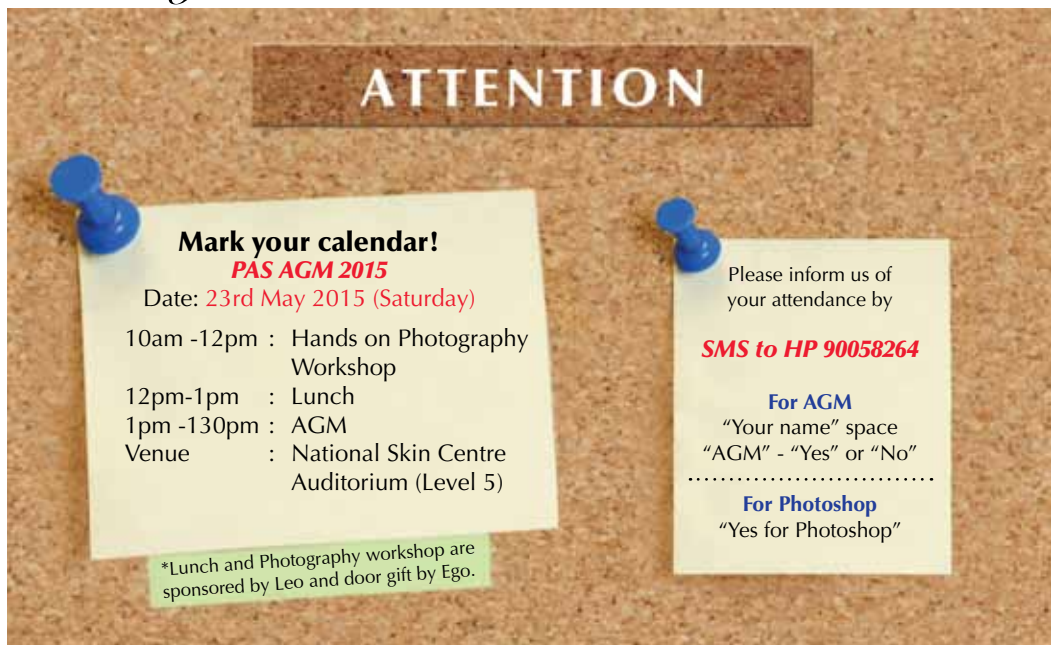
Recently, the government had announced that Psoriasis will be included in its Chronic Disease Management Programme from 1 June 15. This inclusion will enable the use of Medisave to pay some of the outpatient expenses for patients to reduce the out-of-pocket cost for patients. Furthermore, psoriasis will be covered under CHAS (Community Health Assist Scheme) which is a scheme by the Ministry of Health that enables Singapore Citizen's from lower to middle-income households to receive subsidies from participating GPs near their homes.

I was really pleased to hear this announcement as it shows that psoriasis is now recognised as a serious chronic disease in Singapore. This comes on the heels of the recent inclusion of psoriasis as serious chronic disease by the World Health Organisation. With this acknowledgement and inclusion of psoriasis in the Chronic Disease Management Programme, I believe many with psoriasis will find some relief in coping with the expenses of medical care, which can be quite hefty at times. While it certainly does not solve all the of health care expenses issues, it is definitely a welcome step forward.

I believe that the efforts of the PAS in raising awareness of psoriasis in Singapore have not gone unnoticed and have played a role in this increased awareness and recognition of psoriasis. With your support, may we continue to raise Psoriasis awareness and improve the lives of those with psoriasis in Singapore.

God bless.

Colin Theng



ATTENTION

Mark your calendar!
PAS AGM 2015
Date: 23rd May 2015 (Saturday)

10am -12pm : Hands on Photography Workshop
12pm-1pm : Lunch
1pm -130pm : AGM
Venue : National Skin Centre Auditorium (Level 5)

*Lunch and Photography workshop are sponsored by Leo and door gift by Ego.

Please inform us of your attendance by

SMS to HP 90058264

For AGM
"Your name" space
"AGM" - "Yes" or "No"
.....

For Photoshop
"Yes for Photoshop"

Strengthening your mind: Building sustained resilience, creating #PSORFREE moments.

On 8 Nov 2014, PAS patients were invited to an Emotional Resilience workshop organized in conjunction with LEO Pharma at Oasia Hotel. The workshop was conducted by renowned psychiatrist, Dr Ang Yong Guan. This is the second consecutive year that Dr. Ang is speaking to PAS members after a successful talk on 'Tough minds for tough times' held the previous year.

It is well documented that psoriasis has a profound emotional and social impact on an individual's life. Many are often frustrated with the management of their disease and end up being held hostage emotionally.

In 2013, Dr Ang spoke about toughening our minds when faced with difficult situations that psoriasis exposed us to. In this follow up session, Dr Ang further equipped us with the skills needed to build a sustained resilience to fight this chronic disease. He further emphasized on the power of the mind behind one's abilities to manoeuvre in tough circumstances. He cited evidence on the use of hypnosis and meditation to conquer stress, and taught us on how to open up and communicate on emotional issues.

The essence of the talk is MINDFULNESS- a way of coping with stress and building up high Emotional Bank Account (EBA). A healthy EBA can lead to high self-esteem and emotional security, both of which are ingredients of a strong mind. Activities which lead to a sense of achievement or give rise to positive feelings will result in positive deposits in EBA.

It is within the Hippocampus that emotional memories are stored. The more positive memories we have, the higher our Emotional Bank Account, the stronger our minds.

How do we strengthen our EBA?

The environment we are in and the activities we do feed the limbic system and this forms the basis of the nature of our EBA. Being exposed to events that give us a good sense of achievement helps grow our EBA, which in turn gives us high emotional security and self-esteem.

We can nurture our EBA by practicing **C.O.N.T.R.O.L**.

C: Calm down, take a deep breath

O: Open up the 5 fingers to practice MINDFULNESS

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. When we commit ourselves to paying attention in an open way, new possibilities open up and we have a way to free ourselves"
– Jon Kabat-Zim

There are 4 key principles of MINDFULNESS that can be represented with our hand:

✓ Our 5 fingers represent uniqueness. There is no perfection or one size fits all in all situations.

✓ Our thumb and last finger represents that everything has 2 sides. The thumb represents positive aspect (thumbs up), the last finger represents negative (last). We need to always be mindful of the positive and negative aspects in every person or situation. There is no perfect situation, we should look for the positives in every imperfection.

✓ Our thumb, middle finger and last finger represents the past, present and future. We should come to terms and accept our past, embrace the present and plan for the future without worrying too much.

✓ Our 5 fingers when opened up again represents FOCUS: Focus on the present, stay Open to all options and solutions, stay Calm in the midst of stress and tension, be Uncritical of self and others, and lean on friends, hobbies and religion for Support.

In other words, in MINDFULNESS, we are constantly reminded to focus on the positive, shift our focus away from the burden of psoriasis, but embrace other aspects of life.

N: take a New approach to the stressor.

T: Think positively

R: Relax through activities like sports and hobbies.

O: Open up to others

Openness is a very powerful tool to share our stress and unload our burden. Often, psoriasis make us shy away from the public, ending up in reclusion. This does nothing to alleviate our burden. Instead, communicating to others and penning our thoughts are ways to enhance oxytocin levels and strengthen our minds.

L: Link up with God (religion) or Inner self (Meditation).

Psoriasis is indeed a debilitating disease due to its nature, but there is no need to be held beholden to the condition. The toughening of the mind is only the first step to conquering the disease. Through practicing the approaches imparted by Dr Ang, we can sustain the emotional resilience that will help us address this long term condition.

“Do not let circumstances influence your thoughts and moods. Choose your thoughts and soon your life would mirror those thoughts”- Anon.



My thoughts on the Emotional Resilience Workshop by Janice Tan E Chinn

I remember vividly, last year at this time, when my aunt and I attended Dr Ang Yong Guan’s workshop. We came in sceptical but left feeling as happy as larks as we had learned how to identify and cope with the stressors of our lives. We learned that all of us must try to make deposits into our Emotional Bank Account (EBA) in order to keep feeling positive and emotionally secure and happy. We also learned the importance of hugging or cuddling each other to give support, and it also optimize the oxytocin (a stress hormone) level in our body. This helps to protect the cardiovascular system from the effects of stress. It also helps heart cells to regenerate and heal from any stress-induced damage.

Having diligently practised our newfound knowledge on how to lead a happier and healthier life, we were overjoyed to hear that Dr Ang will once again share with us more of his words of wisdom.

As a psoriasis patient, I am sure many of us were once shocked in disbelief, angry with guilt or disappointments and depressed with chaotic feelings in our heart, when our doctor first announced to us our illness. Have we come to terms with it today? We are at the cross roads, not knowing where to go, but in this cosy little room, Dr Ang helped us to focus on Mindfulness. He showed us how to build resilience so that our body, mind and skin can achieve the optimal result.

When faced with any stressor, we must learn to be in C.O.N.T.R.O.L.

As in Dr Ang’s speech, we must first calm down and do deep breathing. Next, we must open up our minds (open up our 5 fingers and practice MINDFULNESS) and recognize that all of us are different and that everything or any situation each has positive and negative aspects. Nobody or no situation is perfect and we must always try to look for the positive in every person or situation. With these, we must also learn to focus on the

Present. We must learn to enjoy and cherish the Now and not be haunted by the Past or worry about the Future. Following this, we must FOCUS, i.e. to be positive, to plan for the future and be opened to all options and solutions. Stay calm in the midst of stress and tensions and not be critical towards oneself or others. Last but not least, be mindful that many people around us are always there for us, ready to support us.

My favourite activity for the day was Containments vs Closure. This was a fun and easy way to identify our stressors and unload these “heavy loads” off our shoulders. For instance, we put our stressors or issues into different containers on the shelf. We can have a whole wall of open shelves with many containers of different colours. These containers may represent peoples around us, with big or small issues. For example, we can put father into a container, mother into another container, mother-in-law into a black container and child no. 1 into a red container and the list goes on. What we have to do is, over a period of time, be it days or months or years, is to clear these containers and bring them towards Closure. Once we reach Closure, it is as good as acknowledging that we have diminished the stress or have thrown the stressor away. Sometimes, the problem or issue may not be resolved over the years. Even so, putting them in the closure column does help us to lessen our load. Recognising, acknowledging and admitting to the situation does help. There will be times when situations are beyond our control, even when years have passed. At least, by acknowledging it and not be in a state of denial will empower us to move on in life.

At this meeting, I am so glad that new friendships were made and old friendships were rekindled. Kinships were reaffirmed and many of us left with much lighter footsteps. We looked into one another’s eyes and found peace and contentment.

I am very grateful to Sister Tan and her team, and all the nurses, sponsors and volunteers who made this event possible.

'My experience at the 2nd Dermatology Patient Organization Forum (6th-7th November 2014 – Zurich, Switzerland) by Benjamin Goh



Twenty-five participants from patients associations were hosted by 13 Novartis employees in Zurich, Switzerland at the 2nd Dermatology Patient Organization Forum.

The Forum discussed the role of patient organizations in empowerment and advocacy in dermatology. The speakers were from a wide range of organizations, viz., ISPOR (the International Society for Pharma-economic & Outcomes Research), IAPO (International Alliance of Patients' Organizations), Active Citizenship Network, Lithuanian Cancer Patient Coalition, European Multiple Sclerosis Platform, Center for Pharmaceutical Care Development, Canadian Skin Patient Alliance and academic professors.

The Patient Organization representatives were mainly from Europe: the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey. The only 2 non-Europeans at the forum were from Brazil and Singapore.

The speakers shared information on their organization's work and experience on how their respective patient organizations approach patient empowerment and advocacy. The Forum focused on 2 levels of empowerment- the patient himself and the patient organization.

For the patient, we discussed driving awareness, providing information and supporting self-advocacy. Patient rights differ from county to country, but we have common priorities

like respect, choice and preferences, involvement in care decisions, access to support and availability of information. It is agreed that patients must work together to achieve the goals.

Patient Organizations have to identify the most appropriate and relevant target audiences to achieve patient empowerment. Many healthcare systems are experiencing growing challenges and competing priorities, and many countries have prioritized resources to acute illnesses over chronic ones. Thus it is vital for patient organizations to actively and intentionally engage with relevant stakeholders if we want to be heard. First, we need to identify the key stakeholders. We also need to prepare, i.e. conduct studies, surveys and gather data to support our cause. We need to find a common ground to align ourselves with national interest and priorities, and find ways to work with and compliment them, instead of competing with them. It is agreed that patient organizations can only be taken seriously if we are representing a significant segment of patients. Increasing our membership will increase our voice.

The selection of the participants for this Forum was stringent, and PAS is grateful to Novartis for selecting Singapore as one of the participants.