

Chapter Connection

10th Issue - April 2010

Chapter Board 2009-2011 - Dr I. Swaminathan, A/Prof Cheah Wei Keat, Dr Chia Kok Hoong, Dr Chan Hsiang Sui, A/Prof Pierce Chow, A/Prof Jimmy So, Dr Vijayan Appasamy, Dr Chen Chung Ming and Dr Tan Kok Yang

Chapter Connection is a newsletter specially brought to you by the Chapter of General Surgeons under the purview of the College of Surgeons, Singapore. The Board of the Chapter of General Surgeons is well represented with members from different institutions and this would mean that you could find the latest happenings of the general surgery community of these institutions in this newsletter. This newsletter is published quarterly and will be distributed to the Members of the Chapter of General Surgeons. On the goodwill of the Chapter Board, this quarterly newsletter will also be distributed at no cost to the Trainees and Fellows of General Surgery in various public hospitals.

Message from Chapter Chairman

Dear surgical colleagues,

This issue of *Chapter Connection* begins on a rather lighter note than normal. Many amongst us have fed back to say that we need not always have scientific content. It is refreshing to have something outside our specialty, such as wine tasting or running. Being an enthusiastic runner myself, I have written an article on running the marathon, which I hope you find interesting. Those who know me well will tell you that I take my running very seriously. In fact I run five times a week, varying distances, totalling fifty to sixty kilometres a week. I have run nine marathons since 2003 and will complete my tenth this year. They say if you turn play into work, your work will become play and will not be stressful. I can vouch for that.

Exciting developments are in store for you. The chapter has decided to form an In-training Surgeons group, to foster better relations among the younger set. They have very interesting plans for the future, such as regular Teaching sessions and a Journal Club.

It is my fervent wish that we surgeons come together to foster good understanding, and be a united bunch, like our Orthopaedic and Urology colleagues. They have put in place very structured teaching programmes, regular assessments and the infrastructure to organize excellent scientific meetings. They also interact socially, with golf, games and family fun. There is no reason we cannot match them.

This year's Exit Exam Preparatory Course will be held in June, and TTSH is the convening hospital. Further refinements have been made and we hope the trainees find it useful, as they prepare to exit. After you exit, please join us and serve your community of surgeons too!

Warm regards,

Dr Swaminathan I.

**Chairman, Chapter of General Surgeons
College of Surgeons, Singapore**



**Wishing everyone
Happy Holidays on:**

2 Apr 2010 – Good Friday

1 May 2010 – Labour Day

28 May 2010 – Vesak Day



News/Articles Contribution & Enquiries:

**College Secretariat
College of Surgeons, Singapore
81 Kim Keat Road, #11-00 NKF Centre
Singapore 328836**

Tel: 65-65937807 Fax: 65-65937860

Email: css@ams.edu.sg Website: www.css.edu.sg

**Contribution of any interesting news & articles from Chapter
Members are welcome for consideration to publish in
Chapter Connection.**

**A Newsletter brought to you by the Chapter of General Surgeons, College of Surgeons, Singapore.
All rights reserved. Permit No. MICA (P) 232/03/2008**

News to share with your
peers in the Gen. Surg.
community? Share it in
"Chapter Connection"!
Email your news to
css@ams.edu.sg now!

**NEWS
FLASH!**

Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

The much awaited Khoo Teck Puat Hospital will commence its operations in full force with effect from 28 June 2010.

Memorandum of Understanding between College of Surgeons, Singapore (CSS) and Médecins Sans Frontières Hong Kong (MSF Hong Kong)

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the College of Surgeons, Singapore ("College") and Médecins Sans Frontières Hong Kong (Doctors Without Borders) ("MSF-HK") on 5 March 2010 which allow the College to take a greater step into giving back to the society, especially to the under-privileged groups - the victims of natural or man-made disasters and victims of armed conflict.

MSF was founded in 1971 by a small group of doctors and journalists who believed that all people should have access to emergency relief. MSF was one of the first non-governmental organizations to provide urgently needed medical assistance and to publicly bear witness to the plight of the people it helps. MSF is made up mainly of doctors and health sector workers and is also open to all other professions which might help in achieving its aims.

The College wish that this partnership and community project would benefit the indigent, the deprived and the injured in natural and man-made disasters. If you are interested to know more about MSF, a copy of the MSF brochure can be requested from the CSS (for local mailing only) or you can access to MSF-HK website at www.msf.org.hk.

Upcoming Events of Chapter of General Surgeons

Exit Examination Preparatory Course 2010 for Advanced Surgical Trainees in General Surgery

29 June to 3 July 2010

Hosted by

*Alexandra Hospital, National University Hospital,
Singapore General Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital*

Highlights

**Subspecialty Lecture Series, Different Topical Clinical Case Discussions,
Mock VIVA, and the "Surgeons-cum-Trainees Night"**

College of Surgeons Dinner 2010

October 2010

Venue TBA

Highlights

Academic Procession

Welcoming of Newly Admitted College Members Joined as FAMS in 2010

College Lectureships and Awards 2010

Ample Networking Opportunities Amongst Surgical Disciplines

**Registration details will be announced in due course.*

MEDICAL SCHOOL

© Original Artist

Reproduction rights obtainable from
www.CartoonStock.com



"...And because there are four basic
steps to an appendectomy, we
refer to it as a 'par four'."

Running Your First Marathon – at Age 46

Authored by: Swaminathan I., Chairman of Chapter of General Surgeons, CSS

It may seem like an odd topic for a Surgeon to write, but I have to confess I am addicted to running. Yes, I ran my first full marathon when I was 46, and lived to tell the tale. Since then, I have run the full distance every year, at least once, and twice for the past two years.

The inspiration came ten years earlier, in 1993, when I was 36. The chief of Medicine in my Hospital was 55 when he ran his marathon. *"If he can do it, so can I"* said my ego. Thus my passion was born.

I actually got up to a three quarter marathon that year – it took four hours and I was unable to walk for a week. It used to be called the Mobil Marathon then. When it came to the full marathon, I either chickened out or was tired after returning from an overseas conference a day earlier, depending on which version you choose to believe.

After that came kids and the shift to private practice in 1996, and a good five years to establish myself. When the passion re-surfaced in December 2002, it became my New Year Resolution for 2003. On the penultimate day of that year, fate threw spanner into the works, when I fractured my fifth right metatarsal, playing soccer with my kid!

A good three months of rehab, aided by motivational talks from my Orthopaedic classmate followed. I swam three times a week and did static quads exercises. When I resumed walking and weight bearing, it hurt, with electric shocks across the outer side of the foot.

After that came the regular runs, no particular training program yet. I ran when I could and as far as I could. Sometimes mornings, sometimes evenings, no fixed routine or target mileage. I could run ten kilometres in under an hour and therefore calculated that I could finish in four hours and ten minutes! Rather naively it must be said, for it does not quite work that way – read further.

I began reading up and getting tips here and there. They said "run ten kilometres each time, a full marathon every week, and you can do it". . . So I ran, five kilometres, then ten kilometres and hoped that it was enough.

Come marathon day, and I began getting the shivers. Self-doubt crept in. *"What if?..."* suddenly became the only thought. More so because I am vegetarian – would I have the stamina and strength to pull through?

I ran, and it seemed easy. No cramps, just boredom. Up to 30 kilometres, I did fine. Then over-confidence crept in, for I had taken only three hours and a quarter, so I began to walk. That was disaster. You know what they say, once you walk you are doomed! It took one and a half hours for the twelve kilometres. Total time taken was five hours and forty-five minutes. I was nearly in tears as I made my way across the finishing line

I had not fainted, collapsed, blacked out or puked. Just sore quads and burning groins and buttock cleft. The first thing to remember – grease these parts well, for the pain is unbearable! It took a week to clear the lactic acid accumulated in the thighs, but it was not as bad as I expected.

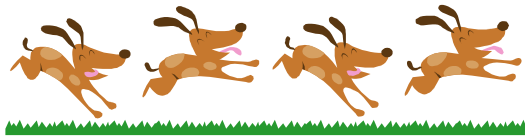
After that I trained harder, yet it got easier. I had a rough training regime, which I perfected over the years. The next marathon saw me reduce my time by nearly an hour! I am pleased to report that my personal best of four hours and thirty-four minutes was achieved when I turned fifty-one! You can do it too, you just have to be disciplined and focussed.

There are two good local marathons - Sundown in May and Stanchart in December. These are well-organised and have relatively flat courses. The participation has increased several folds over the years, and some complain that they are too crowded. Yet more and more Singaporeans of all ages are signing up. In fact the last Stanchart Marathon was fully taken up within weeks of opening. I think it shows how much health-conscious we have become.

The best thing about running marathons is that you seldom have to watch what you eat, because it all gets burned up when you run consistently. It is definitely a good idea to plan and to follow a training schedule, with rest days in between, long and short runs, speed work, fartleiks and such. Hill training is a must for all marathoners.

It is also important to listen to your body. When you are fatigued, it is better to skip a run or two, rather than risk injury, which puts you out of action for longer periods. It is not true that only beginners get training injuries, for even seasoned runners have been known to suffer from tear muscles and tendons. It is very depressing to have to lay off for six weeks, as I found to my horror last year, when I had a torn calf muscle!

If anyone has any questions or would like to get started on running a marathon, I will only be too happy to give my two cents' worth. Happy running!



Some Important tips for beginners:

1. Medical Examination – Make sure you are medically fit before embarking on your training. Go for a full check-up, including ECG, Treadmill and if needed CT CORUS.
2. Build up the kilometres gradually. Follow any running plan. Many are available online. For beginners, 40 to 50 kilometres per week is the usual, increasing to 60 kilometres one month before the actual run.
3. For advanced runners, the weekly distance is 60 to 80 kilometres, with up to 100 kilometres one month before.
4. Always taper, i.e. reduce the intensity and duration of the run - with three weeks left and before the marathon itself. Your body will then be rested and raring to go!
5. Listen to your body. Pain is a warning sign. Never endure it, hoping it will go away, because it does not! Also avoid NSAIDS and anti-inflammatory drugs, which mask pain but note the ongoing damage to your joints, muscles and ligaments. Heroes die young!
6. Run with a buddy, not your wife. Wives always tell you to take it easy!
7. Pre-marathon preparation by carbo-loading helps. Do it.
8. Caffeine is a useful drug, which keeps you awake. But if you have gastritis, avoid it, or else you will get bloated.
9. Drink from an early stage, 150 mls each time. Do not wait until you are thirsty; at the same time do not drink and run like a bloated camel.
10. Psyche yourself before the race. Promise yourself a reward – that gadget which you always wanted, or the holiday you will take after the marathon. I always have my annual vacation right after marathon day, to recuperate before I resume work.



Some Benefits of Jogging and Running:

1. It provides a great cardiovascular workout, strengthens and tones your muscles. Regular jogging gives better overall physical condition as well as some other health benefits, including mental benefits such as relaxation and reduction of anxiety.
2. Jogging makes the heart stronger. It increases the capacity of the blood circulation and of the respiratory system.
3. It speeds up the digestive system and can help to relieve digestive problems.
4. It counteracts depression, as all forms of exercise can help people cope with depression.
5. It increases the capacity to work and lead an active life.

SPECIAL FEATURED ARTICLE

ONE HOPE, ONE DREAM

Authored by: Lynette Loo, National University Health System

As I gazed into the merry, beautiful eyes of the little girl in front of me, I cannot help but feel elated. A deep sense of fulfillment descended upon me as I sensed the gratitude and happiness emanating from the girl's mother and the impish 6 year-old patient. I've just operated on the girl's hernia and she was about to hop onto her mother's old, rundown motorbike (without any helmets).

"Sakit?" I enquired. "Onak, onak...." She smiled as they rode off.

Operation Share International (OSI) is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 2001 by a group of physicians from United States of America. They are physicians who wanted to provide high-quality surgical care to the most impoverished and neglected people in the most remote parts of Philippines. Some of us from various hospitals in Singapore were fortunate enough to be able to join previous missions organized by OSI in the past and upon building good contacts, we were able to join the 8th mission in the Philippines, centering around Sogod, Cebu island in late January 2010.

The vivid opening scene described above is one interesting incident out of many during my days in Sogod, Cebu. People streamed in and out of the tiny district hospital in the little province, seeking help as the doctors and nurses worked non-stop in few makeshift theatres. Some patients were sitting down as we removed lumps in lightning speed while others were sedated or put under anaesthesia in 2 little rooms shared by 4 operating teams.

I consider it pure joy and honour to be able to work with many wonderful, selfless surgeons and surgical residents from Cebu Doctors University Hospital (CDUH) and the group of volunteers from Singapore various hospitals (namely 8 surgeons, registrars and MOs from NUH and 2 doctors from SGH and AH respectively)

The first day started with a minor culture shock (for me, at least) as I discovered that we could take out lumps of any size with only 3 or 4 instruments...a blade (without blade holder), artery/clamp, needle holder and a pair of scissors (and when its not necessary sharp, we made do with the blade!). Giving the patients LA was actually breeze-free as the tough Cebuanos didn't even bat their eyelids as we tackled large lumps as big as a dinner plate with just some of lignocaine. Amazing people! Working non-stop, we operated on 5-10 patients per session per surgeon in the minor OT.

At the same time, many other teams were working hard in removing big uterine or ovarian masses, thyroids and hernia in the major OT. I joined them when the minor OT became way too hot and unbearable in the late afternoon and discovered that the major OT was almost equally as hot.

Sweat trickled down my scrubs as we operated with table lamps and head lights. Light was inadequate, equipments were at times lacking but we know that we must work under whatever circumstance, pushing our endurance and skills to the limits. Yet I applaud the nurses, nursing assistants, anaesthetist and triage doctors. They are the unsung heroes for supporting and aiding us all the way. Without them, without the wonderful human spirit of love and giving, we couldn't have done all these operations in extreme circumstances. Bravo and well done!

Most importantly, I am sure that this exchange of skills, cultural experience and knowledge between the surgeons from Singapore and Philippines will culminate in better ties and regional co-operation in the future. As I observed the wonderful, skillful hands of the surgeons I've met here, I realized that I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunities given to me in Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines.

Although the whole trip ended so quickly, I know that I will see Cebu again. For the warm, friendly souls I've met and the grateful patients have truly touched my heart. Even as I walked down the ward on the last day, checking on all the patients that we operated on, we knew that a lot of good has been done, all thanks to the marvelous organization by Operation Share International and the flawless teamwork and cooperation by all the doctors, nurses, medical assistants, nursing assistants, volunteers and friends.

😊 *A Note of Thanks to A/Prof Jimmy So for contributing this article.*

Contribution of any interesting news & articles from Chapter Members are welcome for consideration to publish in this quarterly newsletter. Please send it to the College Secretariat at css@ams.edu.sg.

