

## THE ROBERT LOH FACULTY SCHOLAR PROGRAMME IN OPHTHALMOLOGY



Dr Robert Loh's contributions to the field of Ophthalmology in Singapore have been immense. With just a small department consisting of a handful of Ophthalmology trainees, he built up and trained numerous expert eye surgeons within a decade and further instituted in them his ideals and values in the treatment of patients, regardless of their social status.



Among his many contributions, he led the establishment of the first Eye Bank, the introduction of micro and laser surgery, lens implants, retinal detachment surgery, corneal grafting and other innovative procedures that we take for granted today.

Early in the 1960s, Dr Loh set up the Singapore Society of Ophthalmology (SSO) with only 13 members, and was elected as its founding President for more than a decade (1963-1976). Today, SSO has a membership of more than 200 ophthalmologists. The Society was

the precursor to the Chapter of Ophthalmologists, which subsequently evolved to become the College of Ophthalmologists of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AMS). In 1964, Dr Loh was elected as President, Singapore Medical Association (SMA), one of only 2 Ophthalmologists, who has served as the President of this Association.

The Ophthalmology fraternity in Singapore have been one of the significant beneficiaries of Dr Loh's vision, legacy and foundation-building work in the early formative years of Singapore Ophthalmology in the 1950s and 1960s.

Today, Singapore Ophthalmology has a global, leading reputation as a centre of excellence and this is thanks to giants such as Dr Loh. We must and will continue to uphold his vision, dedication and legacy, and the Robert Loh Faculty Scholar Programme in Ophthalmology provides such an opportunity.

This esteemed scholar position will be awarded to an Assistant Professor who is also an emerging investigator. It will assist him during his early research career into medical breakthroughs. This award will seed the foundation of the awardee's medical research career, mirroring Dr Loh's nurturing spirit in the early days of Ophthalmology.

The intent is to raise \$625,000. The Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) will match these efforts with a donation of \$625,000.

The total donation of \$1.25 million will be channeled to Duke-NUS towards the establishment of the endowed Robert Loh Faculty Scholar Programme in Clinical Innovation in Ophthalmology. We hope that this will further attract a matching grant of \$1.25 million from the Ministry of Education.

The eventual aim is a \$2.5 million Faculty Scholar Programme in Ophthalmology, in tribute of the late Dr Robert Loh, who has inspired so many generations of Ophthalmologists.

## **HOW WILL THE FUNDS BE USED?**

This will be subject to approval, and must adhere to the scope and priorities of the Ophthalmology and Academic Medicine missions of the SingHealth-Duke-NUS Academic Medical Centre. The cumulative interest yield from this endowed fund will be used to support our efforts to expand eye care delivery, through these activities:

### **1. Clinical Innovation, Research and Development activities at SNEC/ SERI**

A reasonable portion of the interest income from the Professorship will:-

- i. allow the selected candidate to pursue groundbreaking research and innovation, in line with our goal to provide the best-in-class eye care to our patients.
- ii. support the salary of the holder of the named Faculty Scholar.
- iii. support clinical innovation, research and development projects and programmes.
- iv. fund research support resources, including manpower, equipment, as well as any operating cost to facilitate these activities.

### **2. Robert Loh Lectureship Series**

A portion of the interest income from the fund may additionally be utilised to partially support the Academy of Medicine's Robert Loh Lectureship series.

### **3. Humanitarian Mission**

A portion of the interest income from the fund may be utilised to collaborate with NGOs (i.e. YMCA) to bring medical teams overseas, as part of the Duke-NUS Student Community Services, and/ or related humanitarian missions.

## **WHAT IS AN ENDOWED FACULTY SCHOLAR PROGRAMME?**

An endowed Faculty Scholar is an academic award that the University can bestow on a faculty member, and it lasts as long as the University exists. Thus, it is both an honour to the named holder of the appointment and also an enduring tribute to the individual whom the Faculty Scholar is named after.

The endowed Faculty Scholar Programme serves as a critical element in the recruitment of emerging talents in the medical field. It will serve as a platform for faculty members to aspire to achieve in their emerging academic medicine research.

Building a strong base of talented faculty is important in the cultivation of a robust and dynamic academic medicine environment. Such an environment would help Singapore Ophthalmology to attract leading clinicians, researchers as well as the best teaching faculty and the brightest students.

The endowed Programme will provide the required resources to the named holder of this appointment to spearhead his early research career and excel in academic medicine and clinical innovation. It will form the foundation for emerging talents in the field of Ophthalmology.