

Feature

College of Public Health and Occupational Physicians



15th Public Health and Occupational Medicine Conference: Emerging Stronger as a Community

By Li Zongbin, Lim Wei Xiang, Leonora Liu



The Council of the College of Public Health and Occupational Physicians (CPHOP) and Members of the 15th PHOM Conference Organising Committee having a candid conversation with distinguished guests Prof Teo Eng Kiong, Master of the Academy of Medicine; Assoc Prof Kenneth Mak, Director of Medical Services, and Prof Teo Yik Ying, Dean of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health before the start of the conference.

Our guest of honour, Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health, spoke on the value of health, not just healthcare, and the pandemic's role in raising the profile and importance of public health and occupational medicine. The pandemic had also highlighted how evidence-based public health came into play where research, data, analytics, modelling and simulation were used to guide policy decisions. While a lot of attention seemed to be given to managing the pandemic, public health and occupational medicine practitioners will have to continue to address the social determinants of health to keep the population healthy, and work with primary care providers to prevent the onset of serious illnesses, especially in our rapidly ageing population.



Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health, delivering the opening remarks.



Visiting Academician Prof Gabriel Leung delivering the inaugural André Wansaicheong Lecture.

Visiting Academician Professor Gabriel Leung, Dean of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, and Helen and Francis Zimmern Professor in Population Health, kicked off the conference with the inaugural André Wansaicheong Lecture on “Back to the Future: Revisiting Key Epidemiological Insights of COVID-19”. Professor Leung traced the development of the COVID-19 pandemic from its first discovery in Wuhan to the present day. For each major milestone amidst the pandemic, he explained the data sources and epidemiological tools used, pertinent findings analysed, and the public health principles that shaped Hong Kong’s policies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year’s PHOM conference included 3 sessions covering COVID-19, the transformations in work and health, and population health. In the segment titled “COVID-19: Pandemic to Endemic”, speakers Vernon Lee, Alex R Cook and Angela Chow shared on Singapore’s shift from pandemic to endemic COVID-19, the utilisation of models in shaping policy change and the management of the COVID-19 outbreak in Tan Tock Seng Hospital. As the speakers for the session on “Rethinking Work and Health”, Lam Meng Chon, Gan Wee Hoe and Adrian Toh shared on the care for migrant workers, the challenges and opportunities in occupational health in the COVID-endemic era and on thriving through uncertainties. Finally, speakers Lee Chien Earn, Mok Yee Ming and Jason Yap shared in a segment titled “Towards Healthier Populations”. This segment touched on the road ahead for population health and the collaborations required to facilitate the shift to the population health approach, as well as the meaning of mental health.



The esteemed speakers from each of the three sessions taking questions from conference participants after their sharing.

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All in all, the 15th PHOM conference was a unique and exciting opportunity for the public health and occupational medicine community to gather (virtually) despite the pandemic restrictions. It offered everyone the chance to connect, share their work and engage each other in building the future of Preventive Medicine. Such collaboration is especially important as public health and occupational medicine continues to play a prominent role during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Li Zongbin, Lim Wei Xiang and Leonora Liu are Preventive Medicine residents who were co-opted as members of the organising committee for the 15th PHOM conference.

The 15th annual Public Health and Occupational Medicine (PHOM) Conference was held virtually for the first time on 10 November 2021 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference was chaired by Brian See and themed “Emerging Stronger as a Community”. The conference had close to 300 participants from a wide variety of backgrounds including healthcare professionals, policy-makers, researchers, industry leaders and experts.



*Members of the 15th PHOM Conference Organising Committee with President of CPHOP:
[Front row, from left] Dr Joshua Wong, Dr Matthias Toh, Dr Brian See, Dr Clive Tan.
[Back row, from left] Dr Gary Ang, Dr Leonora Liu, Dr Li Zongbin, Dr Lim Wei Xiang.*

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Our heartiest congratulations to the following prize winners:

Best Oral Presenter

- Migrant Workers and their Concerns during the COVID-19 Pandemic by Goh Xin Rong

Merit Prizes

- The Time-Varying Associations of Social Connectedness and Loneliness with Frailty in Older Adults: A Longitudinal Study by Ge Lixia
- Using Qualitative Methods to Explore Multiple Perspectives on Individual Resilience in Health Among Community-Dwelling Adults in Singapore by Tan Woan Shin
- A Cross-Sectional Study of GPFirst Among Residents in Eastern Singapore with GPFirst Awareness of Experience by Rebecca Ong Hui Shan

Special thanks to:

Oral Presentation Judges, Assoc Prof Adeline Seow and Dr Kenneth Choy

Prize Sponsor, World Scientific Publishing Co Pte Ltd

Conference Secretariat Team, led by Ms Goh Chew Lin

All speakers and attendees of the 15th PHOM Conference



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