

Man on a Mission

Dr Arthur Tseng aims to raise awareness about the most taboo gynaecological conditions *by Maripet L. Poso*

FROM 'HE'S VERY nice and patient' to 'he is worth the long queue' and 'it's like talking to an old friend' – Dr Arthur Tseng's patients only have good words for the young doctor. They have one common concern, however – the queue at his clinic is always long – which only goes to show how good he is at what he does. An Obstetrician & Gynaecologist and Urogynaecologist at Gleneagles Medical Centre, Dr Tseng's former patients still remember him fondly years after he has delivered their babies.

Born to parents who are both general practitioners, Dr Tseng and his two older brothers practically grew up in a health service environment. However, he was the only one who followed in his parents' footsteps. "I remember spending hours in my mother's GP practice as a child, watching her deal with her patients, and attempting to help 'dispense' medications to them," Dr Tseng shared. "The early formative years did influence me to pursue medicine, even though my parents had hoped that I would take up law."

Dr Tseng graduated in 1996 from the University of Sheffield with honours, placing third in a class of 186 students, and returned to complete his Housemanship. By 2002, he had passed his membership examinations (the MRCOG), and in 2005, he was awarded the Healthcare Manpower Development Plan award for Urogynaecology and Pelvic Reconstructive Surgery.

He completed his subspecialty training at King's College Hospital, London. Upon returning to Singapore, he spent a very fulfilling time at KK Hospital honing his skills, pursuing research in clinical drugs and devices pertaining to Urogynaecology, as well as teaching at the Yong Loo Lin School of Undergraduate Medicine and the Duke-NUS Postgraduate School of Medicine. Eventually, in March 2012, he decided to set up his private practice at Gleneagles Medical Centre.

Ezyhealth recently managed to take him away from his busy practice for a few minutes to catch up with the amiable doctor.

Ezyhealth: What exactly does your job as a urogynaecologist entail?

Dr Tseng: Urogynaecology is a recent subspecialty of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, which deals with pelvic organ problems that become more prevalent with age. These can



include bladder problems like urinary incontinence and complicated urine infections, as well as prolapse of the pelvic organs, such as uterine (womb) prolapse, bladder (cystocoele) and rectal (rectocoele) prolapse through the vagina. This can cause problems which range from discomfort, pain, vaginal bleeding, to painful intercourse and obstruction of urination. More importantly, these conditions are extremely embarrassing to women, and many suffer in silence, as such things aren't talked about at all. Awareness is only starting to build amongst Singaporeans that these problems are not considered normal, and can be treated or cured. I would love for ladies to be able to say "I'm not accepting this anymore", and be able to do something about it.

Ezyhealth: What prompted you to set up your own practice – Arthur Tseng Women's Health Services?

Dr Tseng: After 15 years in service, I decided that it was time to set different goals and challenges, in a different environment. Working in a relatively controlled environment like KK Hospital, it felt like a frenetic routine, requiring physical effort but not much mental activity. Learning new skill sets, new processes and methods of dealing with medical conditions, staff and patients has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience for me. I don't think I've laughed so much with my patients or enjoyed their company as much as I do now.

Ezyhealth: What are the common cases you handle at your clinic? On average, how many of these cases do you handle every day?

Dr Tseng: I see obstetrics and gynaecology patients as part of my daily work schedule, but I am very grateful that there is growing awareness amongst Singaporeans about urogynaecological conditions. I would estimate that 30% of my

patients have urogynaecological conditions requiring my attention.

Ezyhealth: What are the most challenging cases you've ever handled in your career so far?

Dr Tseng: It's a good question to ask! The most challenging cases are patients with Painful Bladder Syndrome, where treatment is chronic, often with multiple drug regimens, and often requires help from a dedicated pain specialist. I respect how much effort these patients put into managing their daily symptoms. Their courage and perseverance and the positivity they project help to tide through very trying times.

Ezyhealth: What do you think needs to be done in order to change the people's mindset about this urinary incontinence?

Dr Tseng: Patients need to be brave enough to broach the subject with a trusted doctor or specialist. Medical institutions need to realise that apart from increasing birth rate numbers in Singapore, there is a rapidly increasing ageing population that need equal care and attention. I think that increasing public awareness is important, and KK Hospital Urogynaecology Department was heavily into raising awareness. We used to hold multiple public forums on the different urogynaecological problems. The Obstetric & Gynaecological Society of Singapore, of which I was the previous Treasurer, also promoted all aspects of women's health. We have World Continence Week from the 24 to 30th of June this year, which helps to raise international awareness of bladder problems.

Ezyhealth: Aside from your private practice, you are also involved in public forums to help raise awareness about urogynaecological conditions. Please share with us the latest projects you've done.

Dr Tseng: I talk at CME events, to GP's, trainees at KK Hospital, and

the public at different forums locally. Internationally, I am honoured to be asked to speak about urogynaecological conditions in front of peers and colleagues, so I do travel regionally and further afield for my round of talks. The latest would be at this year's International Urogynaecological Association (IUGA) Pan-Asian conference, to discuss on recurrent Stress Urinary Incontinence (SUI) management strategies.

Ezyhealth: Please give our women readers out there some valuable advice on how to prevent having the most common urogynaecological conditions.

Dr Tseng: For prevention of urinary infections, drink enough fluids and have a healthy diet rich in immune-boosting foods, probiotics and cranberry juice. Practice good perineal hygiene and good toilet habits. If an infection occurs, see a doctor as soon as possible for a urine culture and appropriate antibiotics. The culture result allows us to tailor antibiotic therapy. For urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse, I cannot go against the government's directive to make more babies; in fact, I am all for our population renewing itself. I would suggest that an experienced obstetrician is vitally important, as minimising pelvic floor injury is important for future health. And I cannot emphasise enough the need to perform daily pelvic floor exercises (or Kegel's exercise) in pregnancy, after delivery and throughout a woman's life! It may prevent, and certainly can reduce, symptomatic pelvic floor dysfunction in the long run. An experienced obstetrician would be able to teach and assess pelvic floor exercise and its results. An interesting fact is that antenatal training of the pelvic floor does allow a woman to consciously control the pelvic floor muscles, and that has definite benefits during delivery. ^{eh}