

Outstanding Service Award 2013 – Professor John Eu Li Wong

It has been said that “*A certain crucial hour shall try what mettle a man’s heart is made of.*” This adage was more than apparent when Professor John Wong was asked to chair the Singapore SARS Clinical Consortium (SSCC) during the SARS outbreak in 2003. Prof Wong showed his mettle as he worked closely with senior government officials as well as the scientific and healthcare community, which included over 100 scientists and clinicians from 13 institutions, to fight the SARS threat. A decade later, this fine example of one of Prof Wong’s many extraordinary contributions to Singapore is again being acknowledged.

The conferring of the Outstanding Service Award 2013 emanates from the widely-held esteem and regard for Prof Wong’s longstanding commitment to the pursuit of excellence in the field of medicine and his many outstanding achievements recognized at the university, national and international levels.

Service to NUS and NUHS

Prof Wong played a pivotal role in the formation of the National University Health System (NUHS) which brings together under a single governance structure, the NUS’s Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, Faculty of Dentistry and Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, and the National University Hospital (NUH). The creation of this Academic Medical Centre has been critical in the rapid advancement of the tripartite missions of Teaching, Research and Clinical Excellence which NUHS epitomises today.

Under his visionary leadership as Dean from 2003 to 2011, the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine further steepened its trajectory of growth. He oversaw the revamp of the curriculum into integrated tracks, emphasizing the clinical relevance of basic science and early exposure of students to patients. He was a Dean very much in touch with the students, interacting with them regularly and supporting their medical and extra-curricular initiatives, empowering and encouraging them.

Prof Wong established the Center for Biomedical Ethics at YLLSoM, and made medical ethics an integral part of the medical curriculum. This reflects his own deep personal commitment to

professional and ethical practice in service of patients. Prof Wong himself is a master clinician, widely regarded as a leading cancer specialist who is highly sought after by patients in Singapore and the region. His high international standing is reflected in his induction to the Board of Directors of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the first Asian to achieve this signal recognition.

Serving the Nation

Prof Wong was responsible for building the oncology services in NUH from a modest capability to a full-scale national centre in the form of the National University Cancer Institute Singapore, which he still heads as the founding Director.

Equally notable are Prof Wong's achievements in building research in oncology, as well as in the life sciences during his term as Vice President of Life Sciences at NUS from 2002 to 2008. He has a special talent for nurturing bright young clinicians and clinician-scientists, as well as recruiting world-class talent to NUS, NUHS and Singapore. These efforts have firmly established him as a major architect of Singapore's fast-growing life sciences industry, where he is popularly acknowledged as one of the three musketeers by Singapore's biomedical champion Philip Yeo, who helped to successfully drive Singapore's life sciences initiative.

NUS is privileged to recognise an individual as remarkable and distinguished as Professor John Wong. His outstanding contributions, selfless service and keen commitment to NUS and Singapore are an inspiration not just for the medical profession but for the entire NUS community and beyond.