

2023 National Medical Excellence Awards

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN AWARD

- Professor William Hwang Ying Khee
- Professor Tan Huay Cheem

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN SCIENTIST AWARD

- Associate Professor Mahesh Choolani

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN MENTOR AWARD

- Adjunct Associate Professor Brenda Ang Sze Peng
- Professor Julian Thumboo

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN EDUCATOR AWARD

- Associate Professor Nigel Tan Choon Kiat

NATIONAL CLINICAL EXCELLENCE TEAM AWARD

- EAGLECare: Clinical Assistant Professor Christopher Lien Tsung Chien, Ms Yee Kai Ying, Dr Shaun Gerald Nathan and Ms Jesslyn Ang Lay Teng



(From left) Professor William Hwang and Professor Tan Huay Cheem took home the National Outstanding Clinician Award, while Associate Professor Nigel Tan Choon Kiat was conferred the outstanding clinician educator award for helping to advance the education and training of clinicians here and abroad. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Six senior clinicians, geriatric care team lauded for medical excellence

They boost healthcare and patient safety standards, drive research and education

Joyce Teo
Senior Health Correspondent

An interventional cardiologist who has performed a whopping 11,000 procedures and elevated Singapore's cardiology service to world-class standards, and a neurologist who has helped to advance the education and training of clinicians here and abroad are among the winners of this year's National Medical Excellence Awards.

In all, six senior clinicians and one team were lauded for their achievements in advancing health-

care, improving the standards of patient safety, and driving research and education, which ultimately improved people's lives, said the Ministry of Health (MOH) on Thursday.

Health Minister Ong Ye Kung gave out the awards at a ceremony held at Four Seasons Hotel Singapore.

He said the six individuals and the team personify the spirit of excellence, innovation and dedication, and their achievements were also made possible by the support from their organisations.

Hence, he hopes healthcare lead-

ers will continue to foster such a culture.

For Professor Tan Huay Cheem, a senior consultant and senior adviser at the National University Heart Centre, Singapore, who took home the National Outstanding Clinician Award, this is the second time he has received a national medical excellence award.

In 2007, he initiated a project that reduced the time taken for a patient to have his blocked arteries "opened up" with balloon treatment from the time he arrives at the hospital (door-to-balloon time) to 68 minutes within six months and to 57 minutes by 2010, down from the internationally recommended 90 minutes.

The team won the National Clinical Excellence Team Award in 2011.

The treatment time has since dropped further to 42 minutes, he said.

The outstanding clinician award also went to Professor William Hwang, chief executive of the National Cancer Centre Singapore and a senior consultant at Singapore General Hospital's (SGH) Haematology Department.

MOH lauded him for his sterling contributions in helping to advance haematology and stem cell

transplantation, steering the centre to new heights in clinical service and research excellence, and his dedication to serving his patients.

Prof Hwang serves in several national roles to help shape healthcare for the benefit of Singaporeans, it said.

This year's outstanding clinician

scientist award went to Associate Professor Mahesh Choolani, a senior consultant who heads the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, for establishing a community of clinical scientists and leading various organisations that focus on foetal diagnosis and therapy.

Thanks to him, pregnant women here and in the region can now use a non-invasive test for three common genetic disorders, including Down syndrome, in their unborn babies. Previously, screening tests for these common foetal trisomies used to be done via an invasive procedure that carries a risk of miscarriage.

The outstanding clinician mentor

awards were given to Adjunct Associate Professor Brenda Ang Sze Peng, emeritus consultant and clinical director of the Infection Prevention and Control Department at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, and Professor Julian Thumboo, senior consultant at SGH's Rheumatology and Immunology Department and research director and director of the Health Services Research Unit there.

Prof Ang has spent the past 30 years developing the infectious diseases (ID) speciality and championing infection control, as well as nurtured generations of ID clinicians, according to the MOH citation.

For Prof Thumboo, the success of his mentees reflects his passion in guiding them to their full potential, his citation said. He believes there is no success without a successor, and mentoring juniors helps mentors leave behind a legacy.

Associate Professor Nigel Tan Choon Kiat, a senior consultant at the National Neuroscience Institute and SingHealth's group director of education (undergraduate), was conferred the outstanding clinician educator award for helping to advance the education and training of clinicians here and abroad.

The epilepsia neurologist dedicated the award to the late Professor Loong Si Chin, whom he calls "shi-fu" (Mandarin for master), as it is as much a validation for himself as it is for the foundation that Prof Loong laid that allowed educators like him to do their work, he said.

Prof Loong, who died in 2022 at the age of 87, was known as a superb and passionate educator who conducted legendary grand rounds at the hospital.

"As a role model and senior educator, he knew how to *zuo ren* (be human), to think about others, to teach them, to be enthusiastic, to be conscious of the values of educators."

The clinical excellence team award went to a group behind the EAGLECare programme, established by Changi General Hospital (CGH).

Under the programme, staff of nursing homes in the east are trained to provide geriatric and end-of-life care to their residents, in partnership with acute and community hospitals and general practitioners. As a result, the nursing homes have seen a fall in hospital admissions and length of stay for their residents, MOH said.

Clinical Assistant Professor Christopher Lien, a senior consultant and the director of community geriatrics at CGH, led the EAGLECare team, which includes Ms Yee Kai Ying, an executive at the hospital's intermediate and long-term care integration; Dr Shaun Gerald Nathan, senior resident physician at St Andrew's Community Hospital; and Ms Jesslyn Ang, a CGH senior staff nurse.

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