

## INTERVIEW WITH DATO' DR. LAI YOON KEE



Dato' Dr. Lai Yoon Kee, an ophthalmologist who subspecializes in vitreoretinal (VR) Surgery, currently sits on the board of directors at Gleneagles Penang and is also the chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee.

As a medical student in the 70's, Dr. Lai initially contemplated a career in cardiology or general medicine but soon realized during housemanship that his interest laid in general surgery.

At that time, medical graduates did not have to wait one year for house jobs and upon graduation from University Malaya (UM), Dr. Lai immediately began working as a House Officer and received all his training in UM. Dr. Lai pointed out that working in UM was considered very luxurious with 28-bedded wards which were never overcrowded. Most importantly, he stressed that there were professors, consultants and lecturers who were always readily available for consult when in doubt.

Dr. Lai reminisced that even though surgery was both fun and exciting in the 80's, it was also extremely exhausting with only 5 House Officers assigned to look after 3 wards. It was during this time that Dr. Lai decided that he wished to pursue a surgical specialty that would allow him some quality of life. This led him to focus on ophthalmology and Dr. Lai has never regretted doing so.

Upon completion of his house jobs, Dr. Lai was a trainee lecturer in anatomy for about a year upon which he applied for and was accepted into training for ophthalmology. Dr. Lai obtained his Diploma of Ophthalmology from the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Ireland in 1983, his FRCS Fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh in 1985 and FRCOphth from the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in 1991.

Dr. Lai returned to UM and was appointed as the Head of Department (HOD) of Ophthalmology and was given the task of starting the Masters program. At that time, UKM was already running its Masters program which commenced in 1984. Dr. Lai mentioned that he was very thankful to all the seniors at UKM who were very helpful in guiding UM in starting its very own Masters program which is something that he is proud of as it has enabled the training of many students in ophthalmology who have gone on to treat many thousands of patients.

“UM had very few lecturers during that time but these lecturers were extremely hardworking and willing to go above and beyond to help with the training of the Masters students.”

One such notable lecturer is none other than Dato' Seri Dr. Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail who is currently serving as the Deputy Prime

Minister. Dr. Lai mentioned that she was really fun to work with because she was always very joyful and radiant, which brought a lot of cheer to the department.

His advice to those aspiring to pursue a career in ophthalmology would be to keep working hard and to attend as many symposiums, forums and scientific conferences as possible, where at every stage one could meet up with other professionals and always learn something new.

One of his missions in life is to continue to train new ophthalmologists. Since leaving UM, Dr. Lai continued to return to UM to teach and assist with examinations for many years. In Penang, for the last 24 years he has also been conducting monthly teaching sessions at the Penang GH for the MO's. Dr. Lai remarked that this has been very rewarding for him as well and

that the first MO that he helped to train in Penang hospital is now a colleague at Gleneagles as well. Dr. Lai humbly added that he just assisted in training these individuals and that all credit goes to the Penang hospital department of ophthalmology which has very dedicated teachers, right from the beginning, who spent a lot of time in the clinics seeing patients and teaching students, producing such great ophthalmologists and providing such good services to the people of Penang.

Outside the clinic, you may catch Dr. Lai enjoying some light exercise, reading on a vast number of subjects or even on a trip to a different country! Both Dr. Lai and his wife (who is a cardiologist) find time to travel to new and exciting destinations between their busy schedules.

## SAVE THE DATE



**EVENT** | 3rd Ophthalmology Optometry Conference 2018

**DATE** | 10 -12 August 2018

**VENUE** | Aman Jaya Convention Centre, Ipoh, Perak



**EVENT** | 8th Conjoint Ophthalmology Scientific Conference 2018 (COSC2018)

**DATE** | 15th – 16th September 2018

**VENUE** | The Royale Chulan, Kuala Lumpur