



Dr Hung (left) and her husband Mr Arnold Chan (right) running an outreach influenza vaccination event for primary school students before COVID-19 disrupted such events

Making the world a better place: an interview with Dr Emily Chi-wan Hung

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The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in Hong Kong in 2003 and the more recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic have impacted many people's lives. Few people, however, have had their careers so profoundly transformed by these events as Dr Emily Chi-wan Hung.

Following an unusual career path

After graduating from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in 2000, Dr Hung initially pursued specialty training in paediatrics, as she believed in managing diseases in early life and making a lasting impact on patients' lives.

However, during the SARS outbreak in 2003, Dr Hung's career took its first major change in course. While studying for an undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, Dr Hung had completed a year of training in pathology and virology, with special research focus on human papillomavirus. Because of this background in virology, Dr Hung felt that she could contribute to the effort against SARS, and joined the SARS molecular sequencing team at CUHK. This opportunity led to her to join academia after the completion of her specialist training in paediatrics, and she spent several years researching serum circulatory DNA until she returned to clinical practice as a paediatrician in 2010.

Giving back to the community

Dr Hung firmly believes in the importance of giving back to society, and throughout her clinical career, she has maintained passion and commitment to such contributions. A major focus of Dr Hung's charitable efforts has been the Little Life Warrior Society (<https://www.llws.org.hk/>). The Little Life Warrior Society organises various activities and support groups for paediatric oncology patients and their families, including in-patient ward visits, out-patient activity groups, schoolwork tutorials, and even haircuts for patients. "After my rotation to the Children's Cancer Centre of the Prince of Wales Hospital Department of Paediatrics in 2004," recalls Dr Hung, "I was saddened by the unpredictable disease course of childhood cancers, and the devastating effect it had on young patients and their families." Dr Hung became a medical advisor for the Little Life Warrior Society in 2004, and participated in various activities, including its Youth Group, which supported children cancer survivors who have grown up to become teenagers. She served as a medical advisor for the Society from 2004 to 2012.

As a paediatrician, Dr Hung is a firm believer in disease prevention. In 2016-17, the overall influenza vaccination coverage rate for school children aged 6 to 12 years was only 16%, whereas school-initiated outreach vaccination activities achieved a coverage of about 50%. Therefore, the Department of Health

established the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme and the Enhanced Vaccination Subsidy Scheme in 2018-19 to further increase participation of schools. Dr Hung participated in these schemes and has run outreach influenza vaccination events at different primary schools and kindergartens in the past few years. “The outreach events are important to me because they are instrumental in increasing flu vaccine coverage in children,” says Dr Hung, “This helps to minimise outbreaks, severe complications, and deaths due to influenza in children.”

In addition to her busy clinical work and charitable contributions, Dr Hung also strives to promote medical development in Hong Kong. In order to nurture the younger generation, she holds teaching sessions in her clinic for medical students at CUHK, and she works as a regional trainer for neonatal resuscitation. She is currently an honorary clinical associate professor of her alma mater. In 2015, Dr Hung was selected for the Ten Outstanding Young Persons award in Hong Kong in recognition of her exemplary contributions to medical education and healthcare promotion in Hong Kong. “It was a very humbling and rewarding experience to be selected for this award,” said Dr Hung.

Making high-quality masks for Hong Kong

Similar to the SARS epidemic in 2003, COVID-19 brought about another major career change for Dr Hung. She is once again at the forefront of battling the pandemic, but this time she has adopted her innovation and skills into a new venture. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden surge in demand for surgical masks. In the early days of the outbreak, mask shortages were causing panic in Hong Kong. While procuring masks for her outreach vaccination programmes in January 2020, Dr Hung found that many companies were unable to provide masks or even shipment dates for deliveries. In order to help meet this demand, Dr Hung decided to develop a surgical mask manufacturing and production line in Hong Kong with her husband, who has a background in engineering. Throughout the endeavour, Dr Hung and her husband had to overcome many challenges. Owing to worldwide demand for the raw materials needed for mask production, supplier delays were

frequent, and some suppliers even raised their prices to increase profits. Setting up a clean room for mask production also proved difficult, requiring high-quality renovation work and revisions to meet international standards. There was even trouble sourcing qualified technical support staff, owing to the travel restrictions at the time, so Dr Hung’s team had to self-study to get the mask production machine up and running. Despite the challenges, the mask production line finally began operation in July 2020. In addition to supplying masks to public hospitals, Dr Hung’s company partnered with philanthropists in Hong Kong to donate masks to charitable organisations including The Salvation Army, St James’ Settlement, and Refugee Union. Dr Hung is adamant that quality must be maintained over quantity, and takes pride in providing high-quality masks for medical professionals and the public.

When asked about her future goals, Dr Hung reiterated the importance of altruism: “We have to do the right thing to change the world and make it a better place.”



Members of the surgical mask manufacturing team in the clean room of Dr Hung’s surgical mask factory (from left): Ms Ka-po Wong, Dr Emily Hung, (back row) Mr Chun-yiu Lam, and Mr William Mok