



Services make our community a better place to live: an interview with Dr Yu-cheung Ho

Photograph of Dr Yu-cheung Ho, District Governor (2018-19) was presiding the District Conference in May 2019

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Coming from a humble background, Dr Yu-cheung Ho experienced first-hand the struggles confronted by a community in poverty, which were so common to many of those brought up in those days. The poverty issue, compounded by the many other problems that an impoverished community suffers, exacerbate the difficult situations most of the then residents faced. Because of his upbringing in a challenging environment, Dr Ho developed an interest in helping others, and this was an influential factor in his future work.

Having decided that medicine is one of the better ways to make a direct and positive impact on society, and being interested in the subject matter itself, Dr Ho committed to studying medicine and later graduated from The University of Hong Kong medical school in 1982. With a particular interest in hands-on procedures, he found that surgery was a natural fit and later pursued specialisation in urology. After graduating, he served in the public healthcare sector, and after many years of service, he continued his work in the private sector.

The First Rotary Club in Hong Kong, The

Rotary Club of Hong Kong, was established in 1931. Since then, Rotary International District 3450 (<https://rotary3450.org/>) has expanded so that it now encompasses 105 Rotary Clubs throughout Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, and Guangdong. The Rotary Club endeavours to bring together local business and professional leaders to provide humanitarian work. Over the past few decades, the demands of humanitarian work have broadened in scope, and the challenges have become increasingly global, from pandemics affecting third-world countries to food crises afflicting war-torn regions. To cope with these changing times, the Rotary Club has expanded rapidly across regions, building goodwill for global and local communities and following its motto 'service above self'.

Dr Ho, who has a keen interest in humanitarian work and a passion for helping others, was introduced to be a member of the Rotary Club of Peninsula South by his friends and colleagues. 'It was its hands-on nature, and the emphasis on being non-political, non-religious, and non-commercial that intrigued me at first,' Dr Ho stressed when explaining his

interest in Rotary. ‘We can leverage the strong bonds among various Rotary Clubs worldwide, allowing us to reach out and go further both globally and in local communities.’ Dr Ho holds polio eradication as an example of a global campaign that Rotary has been involved in, where efforts at the local level are supported by coordination internationally, humanitarian issues are best solved with a global framework with devolved local execution.

Since becoming a Rotarian in 1994, Dr Ho has been involved in implementing and delivering various service projects locally and internationally in collaboration with local and overseas Rotarians. One of the more memorable projects that Dr Ho recalled involved providing better surgical care in acute hospitals in Mongolia. Owing to the outdated facilities and equipment and lack of funding, the hospitals were ill-equipped to serve the growing demand of surgical patients. Leveraging expertise from Hong Kong, and coordinating help from doctors from India, Rotary revamped both the laparoscopic instruments and facilities and the surgical skill training of the local surgeons over there. Another project in Mongolia that Dr Ho was involved in was

improving a hospice care centre in Ulaanbaatar to cope with the increasing demand of cancer patients.

In 2018-19, Dr Ho served as the District Governor of the Rotary International District 3450. While serving as District Governor, Dr Ho was particularly enthusiastic about broadening the opportunities for the young and providing a better future for the neglected and disenfranchised groups in local society. He also oversaw a ‘pair-up project’—jointly hosted with the Salvation Army—to provide career and life planning for marginalised secondary school-leavers who were failing in further studies. By pairing students with Rotary Club members from a variety of professions and backgrounds, the project offered the school-leavers guidance on career pathways and opened up new possibilities in their employability.

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a focus for Rotary Clubs, and Dr Ho’s expertise has been invaluable in vaccination drives and health-related campaigns. He has assisted a local Rotary Club which provided COVID-19 vaccinations to children and older or disadvantaged adults in throughout Hong Kong, including Tai Po, Kwun Tong, Lok Fu, and Yau Tsim Mong districts. The magnitude of the pandemic extends far beyond a healthcare issue, and it has also had a huge impact on the economy. Because of the linkage between poverty and poor medical outcomes, it is vital to target poverty and healthcare together in hopes of ensuring equity in medical services and improved health outcomes.

“Being proficient in medicine does not make one a good doctor,” Dr Ho explained. “A good doctor has to cater for the psychological needs of a patient. In order to do so, they must connect with the community and the wider world.” Dr Ho emphasised that participating in charity work and joining service groups provides a unique perspective on the social and psychological needs of patients.

In addition to improving the lives of those in the community, volunteering allows for deeper connections with patients. Through decades of service, Dr Ho is encouraged by the progress that the Rotary Club and other organisations have made so far. He hopes the younger generation can take up the mantle and continue helping those in need and serving the community.



Photograph of Dr Yu-cheung Ho, District Governor (2018-19) of the Rotary International District 3450, at a press conference promoting the Rotary Hong Kong Ultramarathon 2019. The ultramarathon has become a signature event of Rotary in recent years