

Dr Man-kai Wan and the medical students of the Hong Kong College of Medicine at Nethersole Hospital in 1898

TW Wong, FHKAM (Emergency Medicine)

Member of the Education and Research Committee, Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences Society

<https://doi.org/10.12809/hkmj-hkmms202112>

The Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese students was established in 1887 with the London Missionary Society's (LMS) Alice Memorial Hospital as its teaching hospital. Nethersole Hospital was opened in 1893 to relieve the congestion in the Alice Memorial Hospital.

Dr Robert Mclean Gibson (1870-1936) arrived in Hong Kong in 1897 to become the medical superintendent of the LMS hospitals. In his long association with the College, he was a lecturer, the Director of Studies, and a member of the College Court. When the College merged into the University of Hong Kong in 1911, he became founding member of the University Court.¹ This group photo taken circa 1898 shows students of the LMS-affiliated Nethersole Hospital with their teachers (Fig 1). Sitting in the middle in the front row is Dr Gibson, and on his right is Dr Man-kai Wan (尹文楷; 1870-1927), the house surgeon.

Dr Wan (alias Tun-mo Wan 尹端模) is best known in Hong Kong as the founding president of the Hong Kong Chinese Medical Association (HKCMA), the predecessor of the Hong Kong Medical Association, a century ago. However, his medical career actually began in Tianjin. After graduating from the Government Central School (now Queens College) in 1884, he enrolled into the Viceroy's Hospital Medical School in Tianjin.² The medical school was started by the London Missionary Society in 1881 with the sponsorship of Li Hung Chang. It was renamed Pei Yang Medical College in 1893 after the Qing government took over its management. Among his classmates was Dr King-ue Chung, who became the first Western-trained doctor to work in Tung Wah Hospital in 1897. Dr Wan graduated in 1889 and served in the navy for a short stint before returning to Canton. From 1891 to 1896, he worked at Pok Chai Hospital,



FIG 1. This photograph, taken circa 1898, shows students of the Hong Kong College of Medicine with their teachers, Dr Man-kai Wan (front row, 4th from left) and Dr RM Gibson (front row, 5th from left). Among the students are Ko-tsun Ho (back row, 2nd from left) and Luk Ma (back row, 5th from left). It is notable that everyone (except Dr Gibson) was wearing traditional Chinese clothing. Permission to use this photograph was kindly provided to the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences by the Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Foundation

a missionary hospital and medical school run by Dr John Kerr. In addition to providing clinical service, he helped Dr Kerr to translate several medical textbooks into Chinese. He also had the honour of being the first Chinese doctor to publish a lay magazine in Canton to disseminate Western medical knowledge to the general public. During this time, he also collaborated with Dr Yat-sen Sun in running a clinic to cover his revolutionary activities. After the failed Canton uprising in 1895, Dr Sun was forced to flee from China. Dr Wan also decided to relocate to the safer Hong Kong.

He started his Hong Kong career by joining Nethersole Hospital in 1897 after Dr Chung, his classmate, left to join Tung Wah Hospital. He became a tutor for the College and taught various practical subjects. He left Nethersole Hospital in 1902 to start a private practice in Central District. After the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, a National Medical Association was formed in 1915 in mainland China. This probably was the inspiration for local doctors to organise themselves to form an association of Chinese doctors. As a revered local practitioner, Dr Wan was elected and served as the founding president of HKCMA from 1920 to 1922. The same group of local doctors also started the Yeung Wo Nursing Home in 1922, which was the first private hospital run by Chinese doctors. Dr Wan was also active in the local Christian community and was elected president of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1922.

Among the students in the photograph (Fig 1), a few were not from Hong Kong, including HK Tee from Amoy, YS Lee from the United States, and ST Lim from Burma. Some left Hong Kong after graduation to seek employment in other countries, such as HK Tee who went to the Philippines and WO Wong and KS Chan who went to Singapore. Most stayed in Hong Kong and worked in hospitals, clinics or the Bacteriology Institute.³ A few graduates, including Dr Ko-tsun Ho (何高俊; 1878-1953) and Dr Luk Ma (馬祿; 1883-1963) became leaders of the local medical community.

Dr Ho graduated in 1902 and joined Nethersole Hospital in 1903 after Dr Wan had left for private practice. He had a close relationship with the hospital because his uncle, Dr Kai Ho, was one of the founders. He was best remembered for his long association with the Eastern Chinese Public Dispensary (CPD) in Wanchai even after starting his own private practice in 1908. The CPDs were first established in Western District and Wanchai in 1905 to deal with the dumping of dead bodies and provide care for patients with plague. It was run by the CPD committee and eventually the roles expanded to include medical care and vaccination.⁴ Dr Ho joined the Wanchai CPD in 1907 and lobbied for a larger premises at Stone Nullah Lane, which

was completed in 1911. After the revolution in China, he took up the post of vice minister of health for Guangdong from 1911 to 1916. On returning to Hong Kong, he re-joined the Wanchai CPD and remained working there until his retirement in 1949. In 1919 a maternity unit was added to the CPD to provide a Western midwifery service. It was a great success and the CPD committee decided to build a bigger unit in Western District which opened in 1922 as Tsan Yuk Hospital. He was honoured with an OBE in 1949 for his long service for the poor in Wanchai and especially for the tremendous effort he spent to maintain the service during the Japanese occupation. He also played a leading role in the local medical community. He was the Chairman of the Yeung Wo Nursing Home Board of Directors at its inauguration in 1922. He was elected vice president of the HKCMA in 1923.

Dr Ma graduated 3 years later than Dr Ho. After spending a few years working for the CPD, he had the rare distinction of being the first Chinese doctor to join a European group practice (Drs Fitzwilliams and Allan) in 1908. He started his own clinic in Central District 2 years later. He gradually expanded his practice by taking in assistants and partners and formed a large group practice, Ma Luk Sun Hospital (馬祿臣醫院).³ This was probably the first medical group practice established by local Chinese doctors



FIG 2. This prescription sheet, showing the names of the partners and the addresses of the clinics of Ma Luk Sun Hospital, was donated to the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences by Ms Chui-wah Man

(Fig 2). Later, a branch hospital was opened also in Nathan Road, Kowloon. Dr Ma was also a director of the newly formed Yeung Wo Nursing Home in 1922. He served the HKCMA as vice president for the 1933-4 term, and was also active in other social circles. For example, he was an active member and later served as Chairman of the Chinese Club which was established in 1897 to rival the European dominated Hong Kong Club. He was admitted to the Order of St John for his long service for the St John Association and Brigade. He was also well known as an art collector.

Among the 128 students enrolled at Hong Kong College of Medicine from 1887 to 1912, only 60 graduated. One of the reasons for this significant dropout rate maybe due to the fact that the qualification was not recognised under the Medical Registration Ordinance of 1884; the Hong Kong College of Medicine diploma was recognised only after amendments to the Ordinance in 1914. Nevertheless, despite an initially unfavourable practice environment, some of the students that graduated became part of the early medical elite in Hong Kong.

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