



Dermatology, more than skin deep: Dr Nai-ming Luk and the Hong Kong Dermatology Foundation

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Since qualifying in Medicine from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1987, Dr Nai-ming Luk has devoted his career to the practice of dermatology in the public sector and has been instrumental in the development of dermatology in Hong Kong. After his retirement in 2015, Dr Luk embarked on a new project and established the Hong Kong Dermatology Foundation (HKDF) of which he is Chairman.

The Hong Kong Dermatology Foundation

Throughout his clinical career, Dr Luk has observed how the general public consider skin conditions to be insignificant and trivial. “While most skin conditions are not life-threatening, they are highly visible and can severely impact a patient’s quality of life.” In view of this, Dr Luk set up the HKDF, where he utilises his valuable clinical experience to work as a pioneer in improving community dermatology care to enhance both public and professional dermatology education in Hong Kong.

Witnessing how the underprivileged are often deprived of basic dermatology care, Dr Luk strives to provide accessible dermatology consultations to such patients. One of Dr Luk’s cardinal achievements is the inception of the HKDF dermatology clinic. The clinic is free-of-charge and has provided over 300 consultations in the first 6 months of operation. The clinic is currently run twice per week and sees needy or disabled patients who have been referred from over 30 non-governmental organisations. “We are really helping these patients with skin conditions that will otherwise persist and affect many aspects of their lives”, Dr Luk remarked as he pointed to the handwritten thank you cards from grateful patients.

With the aim of enhancing professional

education in dermatology, Dr Luk has also organised geriatric dermatology and dermatology courses for nurses and social workers. He teaches the courses that aim to “train the trainers”, such that his students can develop and share skills with other colleagues in their workplace and maximise the benefits of his lectures. Another of Dr Luk’s brainchilds is the Hong Kong Dermatology Symposium, the annual flagship conference of the HKDF. The symposium offers a platform for professionals to share their knowledge and expertise and is well-attended by local dermatologists, general practitioners, and nurses.

Other professional commitments

Outside of his work with the HKDF, Dr Luk has multiple other professional commitments. He is a medical consultant for the Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association and has been actively involved in pioneering collaborative work between the Down Syndrome Association and the HKDF. One key programme co-organised by Dr Luk was a skin condition screening programme that took place on 13 March 2016 for patients with Down syndrome. A total of 62 patients were screened and 18 who needed follow-up were referred to the HKDF clinic for comprehensive and free dermatology care. Dr Luk also holds an honorary clinical post at the Prince of Wales Hospital where he attends a weekly grand round and teaches junior dermatologists. Dr Luk is also active in research and has recently published on onychomycosis,¹ one of the most prevalent skin conditions in Hong Kong.

Future directions

Despite all his achievements and pioneering work, Dr Luk has no thoughts of slowing down. Looking ahead,

he aims to further expand HKDF's scope of service. He hopes to arrange public education campaigns on skin cancer, as the condition is frequently neglected by the public and is shrouded in myths and misconceptions. On a broader level, although HKDF provides a great service to those in need of dermatology care, Dr Luk believes the true solution lies in the system of dermatology training and service—he believes that more rigorous dermatology training should be offered at an undergraduate level and major advancements are needed to improve the current referral system from primary care to dermatologists. As we enter the era of telemedicine, Dr Luk sees the potential of teledermatology, a developing subspecialty in dermatology that utilises mobile devices and digital images for distant clinical consultations. He believes that one day, teledermatology will be able

to supplement traditional face-to-face consultations and will be particularly beneficial for bed-bound patients in hospitals or old-age homes, broadening the reach of individual dermatologists.

“Medicine is a helping profession”

On a personal level, Dr Luk cherishes the satisfaction of interacting with his patients and this joy keeps him motivated in his daily work. Since his retirement Dr Luk has turned down part-time clinical positions in the public medical sector in favour of pursuing his goals through voluntary work with the HKDF. Finally, Dr Luk reiterates the importance of altruism as a medical professional. “Medicine is a helping profession, your satisfaction and happiness can only be gained through your patients, not by money.”

Reference

1. Cheung YY, Lee SH, Hui M, Luk TN. Effect of pH on fungal growth: problems with using vinegar (5% acetic acid) in treating superficial fungal infections. *Hong Kong J Dermatol Venereol* 2014;22:57-64.



(Top) Dr Luk hosting the annual Hong Kong Dermatology Symposium at the Chinese University of Hong Kong
(Bottom) Dr Luk (right) in his clinic