

“Healthcare for Society”—a column featuring outstanding community contributions

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Volunteer service is one of the most efficient means to gather individuals from all walks of life to build the community, so as to cultivate a harmonic and caring society.¹ The Social Welfare Department of the Hong Kong Government launched the “Volunteer Movement” in 1998 to promote volunteer service in a collaborative, effective, and systematic manner. The Movement implements strategies and coordinates resources for enhancing development of volunteer services in our community. Up to December 2018, more than 1.3 million people have registered as volunteers in our society, with some 3200 participating organisations that are committed to offer volunteer opportunities to our citizens.¹ These figures speak for the enthusiasm and passion of Hong Kong people who are ready to serve the needy, and make a difference in our locality.

The benefits of volunteering indeed extend beyond those received by the service targets.² According to Fritz, it improves self-esteem, reduces loneliness, builds bonds, improves mental health, develops emotional stability, promotes longevity, leads to graceful ageing, and even decreases the risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Unfortunately, according to a citizenship survey,³ the top three reasons given for not participating in volunteering-related activities included work commitments, lack of time, and family responsibilities. This leads to a common misconception that medical doctors can barely afford to serve the community outside clinics and hospitals in their spare time, owing to their heavy workload. However, the “Doctor for Society” section in the *Hong Kong Medical Journal* has proven this not to be the case.

This issue marks six and a half years after the first “Doctor for Society” section that appeared in the *Hong Kong Medical Journal*. This section features interviews documenting the activities and achievements of medical doctors who have contributed substantially to society on a voluntary basis.^{4,5} These interviews also represent the Journal’s contribution from students, as all interviews are conducted by students attending medical school in Hong Kong. The Editorial Board would like to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to all of the students who have contributed to this section.

In the past year, we have read some inspirational interviews: Dr Ralph Cheung commits himself to the Government Flying Service⁶; Dr Kin-hung Lee contributes to public health education⁷; Dr Irene Lo advocates a healthy plant-based diet⁸; Prof Emily Chan breaks down frontiers through medical humanitarianism⁹; and Dr Bernard Chow relieves the pain of patients who suffer from cleft lip and cleft palate.¹⁰ The list of these outstanding leaders is endless and they deserve our recognition.

Starting from this issue of the *Journal*, we have retitled this popular section to “Healthcare for Society”, to embrace all types of professions related to medicine, including personnel in fields such as nursing, midwifery, sanitation, pharmacy, physiotherapy, laboratory medicine, and occupational therapy. Not only doctors perform humanitarian work in society; various healthcare personnel are also involved in this. We believe that leaders and committed allied health professionals are equally excellent exemplary models for our young generation to follow.

The very first interview in the newly titled “Healthcare for Society” section is with Prof KY Yuen,¹¹ the Sir David Todd Orator of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine in 2018, and a substantial contributor to our community. We look forward to reading about the generous efforts of healthcare professionals in future issues of “Healthcare for Society”.

We strongly encourage readers to participate in voluntary work, and to suggest healthcare workers who have contributed to meaningful volunteer work for our interview. Volunteering allows healthcare workers to connect with the community and make it a better place for everyone. We hope that we can play even a small role to inspire readers to volunteer and make a difference to the lives of those in need.

We wish to seize this opportunity to thank all our interviewees and student reporters for their contributions. Equally importantly, we thank you, our readers, and enlist your support to share these excellent contributions with your colleagues and friends.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the concept or design, drafting of

the manuscript, and critical revision for important intellectual content. All authors had full access to the data, contributed to the study, approved the final version for publication, and take responsibility for its accuracy and integrity.

Conflicts of interest

All authors have disclosed no conflicts of interest.

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