

# the DENTAL

S U R G E O N

DEC 2025 ISSUE



システム Toothbrush  
**Systema**  
Hi-Density

**2X Gentler**  
on gums\*

LION

\*As compared to ordinary toothbrush.





**Hi-Density**

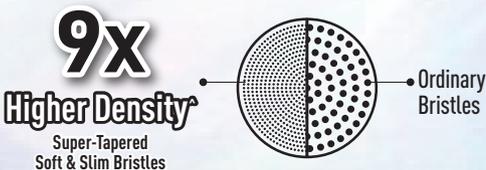


**2X Gentler** on gums<sup>^</sup>

Developed by Systema - **Japan's No.1 Toothbrush Brand**<sup>\*\*</sup>, Systema Hi-Density Toothbrush (Gum Shield / Pro Defence) is **2X gentler on gums**<sup>^</sup> and has **9X Higher Density**<sup>^</sup> Super-Tapered Soft & Slim Bristles that help to generate dense & finer foam<sup>^</sup> for penetrating & cleaning deep spaces between teeth & gums to help to **remove >75% of plaque**<sup>#</sup>



*Elvin Ng*  
Elvin Ng  
Mediacorp Artiste



**Gum Shield**



**Pro Defence**



\*INTAGE SRI+, No.1 Company in Oral Care Category, Value Sales, CY2024. \*\*INTAGE SRI+, Systema is No.1 Brand in Toothbrush Category, Value Sales, CY2024. ^As compared to ordinary toothbrush. #Along gum line or on teeth surface based on Lion lab test. \*Bacterial refers to Staphylococcus aureus and Escherichia coli. The bristles do not kill bacteria in mouth or protect you against disease.

# Editor's Note

As I take up the role of Editor of *The Dental Surgeon*, I first wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Jeremy Sim for his steady leadership and invaluable contributions. His work has laid a strong foundation for the journey ahead.

This issue marks a significant new chapter as we are delighted to welcome a refreshed Editorial Board, comprising colleagues who bring diverse clinical expertise, fresh perspectives, and a shared commitment to elevating the quality and relevance of our content. I am deeply grateful for their willingness to serve, and I look forward to working closely together as we chart the next phase of our publication's evolution.

A major milestone in this edition is our official transition to a predominantly digital format. This move directly supports the SDA's broader commitment to environmental responsibility and embraces the evolving preferences of our members for immediate, accessible content.

This edition is especially meaningful as it carries our profound and collective remembrance of Dr. Ng Fooi Chin. Her passing this year has deeply touched the dental community, and the heartfelt tributes within these pages honor a life defined by outstanding leadership, compassionate mentorship, and remarkable generosity of spirit. As a respected Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon, she served with unwavering integrity and courage—leaving behind a legacy that will continue to inspire all who had the privilege of knowing her. It is our honor that this issue holds space for her memory.

Alongside these reflections, this edition showcases the vibrancy of our profession through a wide spectrum of article, ranging from crucial clinical insights and ethical considerations to personal narratives, research perspectives, and a comprehensive report on the SDA Convention 2025. Together, they highlight the expertise, commitment, and heart that define our community.

As we progress, strengthened by a refreshed Editorial Board and anchored by our commitment to sustainability, accessibility, and quality, I extend my sincere appreciation for your continued engagement. Your readership and support sustain *The Dental Surgeon*, and we welcome article submissions and contributions for future editions.



Yours sincerely,  
**Intek**



**A/Prof. Intekhab Islam**

is a Senior Consultant in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore, and Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. Passionate about education and innovation, he integrates technology, simulation, and reflective learning into dental training, while actively contributing to professional development and collaboration within the dental community.

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# Editorial



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# ***Foreword from The President Dr Eugene Tang Kok Weng***

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we bring you this long-awaited issue of *The Dental Surgeon*, I am reminded of how deeply our publications serve not only to inform but to bind us together as a professional community. While delays are never ideal, they remind us of the importance of keeping connected, current, and present for one another—especially in a profession as exacting and as human as ours.

On **15 September 2025**, the SDA Council had the honour of meeting with **Health Minister Ong Ye Kung, Director-General of Health Prof Kenneth Mak**, as well as Chief Dental Officer Prof Chng Chai Kiat. During this informal meeting, we had the opportunity to raise, directly and constructively, the key issues concerning the welfare and sustainability of our profession. It was a fruitful dialogue, one that reinforced the value of mutual respect, timely communication, and collaborative intent.

In the midst of evolving healthcare landscapes, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** continues to redefine how we diagnose, plan, research, and serve. The recently concluded **16th NUS-SDA Distinguished Speaker Programme** held on **2 November 2025** reflected this reality, featuring thought-provoking keynotes on:

- AI for Diagnosis
- AI for Treatment Planning and CBCT Advances
- AI Optimization for Research in Bioprinting
- AI Applications in Dental Public Health.

These sessions underscored not merely AI's potential, but our responsibility to adapt, innovate and integrate wisely—ensuring that technological advancement continues to enhance, rather than overshadow, the central tenets of clinical care and ethical practice.





**Dr Eugene  
Tang Kok Weng**

*BDS (Singapore) NUS,  
DGBP (UK),  
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Grad Dip Geriatric Dentistry  
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*Two times Vice President, SDA.  
Two times President, SDA.*

*Founding Member, College of  
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(Singapore)*

*Organizing Chairman,  
IDEM (International Dental  
Exhibition and Meeting, 2016)*

*Dental Convenor,  
Tzu Chi International Medical  
Association  
(TIMA Singapore)*

*Chairman,  
SDA Standing Committee  
(dealing with  
CoC related matters)*

*Director,  
Aesthetic Dental Care  
Pte Ltd*

Yet even as we look toward a future shaped by innovation, we are reminded of those whose steadfast presence helped build the foundations of where we stand today.

It is with deep sadness that we record the passing of **Dr Ng Fooi Chin**, an esteemed Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon and honoured member of our profession. Dr Ng was not only a distinguished clinician and leader, but a woman of rare sincerity, dependable integrity, and compassionate service. Her contributions to SDA, her ethical clarity, and her quiet strength in humanitarian missions and professional committees have left a legacy that will continue to inspire us. Her kindness, intellect, and gentle laughter are profoundly missed. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to her loved ones, and to all who had the privilege of journeying with her. May she rest in eternal peace.

As we reflect on where we've been and look ahead to what lies before us, let us continue to uphold the highest values of our calling: **professionalism, fellowship, and service**—to our patients, our colleagues, and our society.

Thank you all for your enduring support, your dedication to excellence, and your commitment to one another.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eugene Tang Kok Weng'.

**Dr Eugene Tang Kok Weng**  
President  
Singapore Dental Association

# Hailing Academic Dentistry in Private Practice

By Dr Ho Kee Hai



*Dr Ng signing the MOU with University of Warwick.  
In attendance: Mr Alan Collins (British High Commissioner to Singapore)  
and Dr Balaji Sadasivan (Senior Minister of State for Health, Singapore);  
standing 3rd and 4th from left respectively.*

Dr Ng Fooi Chin's many contributions have been narrated by others.

One of her contributions in academic dentistry to SDA members and Singapore was her bringing the University of Warwick MSc Dental Implantology programme to Singapore.

This enabled our GPs to earn a UK MSc degree with no loss of opportunity cost.

Many a time whilst helping others, she sustained infliction.

Yet she took it all in the chin.

She endured the pain privately; to maintain dignity and not to burden others.

May her soul rest in eternal peace.



**Dr Ho Kee Hai**  
Past President SDA  
Roll-of-Honour SDA  
Former HoD, OMS, NUS

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# *In Loving Memory of Dr Ng Fooi Chin*

*By Dr Goh Siew Hor*

**O**n the morning of 14 June 2025, I received a call notifying me that Dr Ng's breathing had started to slow and she was not responding. When I got to her place, she had already taken her last breath.

## **Personal Side of Dr Ng Fooi Chin**

Many would be familiar with her public side—strong, determined and extremely meticulous in all her undertakings. For her contributions to the profession, she was awarded the SDA Roll of Honour.

In private, she was a warm and generous person who valued kinship and remembered her benefactors.

She would keep in contact with those who had helped her when she first started out in private practice even after they retired from practice. One such person was Professor Malcom Harris. She would make it a point to instruct her niece, who was then studying dentistry in the UK,



*Lunch with family and Dr Ho Min Na, someone whom she regarded as her teacher and benefactor.*

to visit him whenever she was passing through London. She would also correspond regularly with him via email and call him on special occasions. In her will, she writes:

*"On this note, I would also like to express my deep gratitude to another mentor and eminent benefactor from London, Prof, Malcom Harris. I will never forget his offer of the scholarship from Triple Royal Colleges to me and his continuous support, trust and confidence in me through the years. He introduced and recommended me to the UK University for consideration as the Director of their Far East*

*MSc Implant Programme that put me to the next stage of my career. This is instrumental in my pioneering the start of Coden Specialists. The rest is history. I wish that Prof Ho Kee Hai can contact Prof Harris on my behalf. I bequeath to Prof Malcom Harris ..."*

An incident I remembered was the time when some of the Malaysian Dental Assistants could not find suitable accommodation when they first started work. She graciously allowed them to stay with her for free until they found their own place. Such was the extent of her generosity.

### On Being her Godson

Many were surprised to learn that I was her godson. This was a bond that was forged during the challenging periods when we were in the Standing Committee, the SDA Council and later during her illness. There was never much of a formal discussion on the matter. To her, I was like a son whom she felt comfortable sharing her thoughts on Dentistry and life. And she treated me with sincerity and concern for my well-being. She did so without the need for me to formally acknowledge it.

Even during the time when she was undergoing medical treatment, she still paid attention to what was going on in my life. We often caught up over meals and in the later years, regular trips to the hospital. She was a fighter and always tried to remain positive.

3 weeks before her passing, she asked if I would allow for my name to be included in her obituary and I agreed. She was a teacher, benefactor, godma and friend to me.



*Message demonstrating her positivity and interest in the lives of people around her*

### Care and generosity

She was heavily involved with humanitarian efforts through organisations like Tzu Chi. Through Coden Specialists, she has also been giving generously to the Faculty of Dentistry.

In her will, she has bequeathed the following to charity

- \$300,000 to the Faculty of Dentistry which may be used for endowment or bursaries for poor, deserving Malaysian students
- \$250,000 to Tzu Chi Foundation for the long term benefit of the less fortunate or medical equipment for the medically compromised members of the public
- \$200,000 to various Buddhist temples or organisations for the printing of free Buddhist books
- \$200,000 to a church for projects that benefit the public
- \$250,000 for the purpose of national cancer research.



***Dr Goh Siew Hor** graduated from NUS in 2008. He is an elected SDC member, SDHF president and SDA past president. He is presently in Papua New Guinea serving at a Christian Missions Hospital.*

In honour of her memory, I will be donating the monies bequeathed to me to her Home Hospice care provider so that more people may be able to receive the same benefits.

### Concluding remarks

In her last days, she shared her hopes that friends would not be overly sad at her passing and celebrate her life. While there may be things that could have been done better, she has put in her best in good conscience.

She has been blessed with a caring family, loyal friends and an illustrious career. For this, she is grateful.

As she now goes to a better place, I believe that it would be her wish for her family and friends to move on and live a life that is equally fulfilling and meaningful.



*Dr Johnny MH Lee was a Colombo Plan student from Kuching, Sarawak. He graduated from the University of Singapore in 1973, with a BDS degree. He has a passion for writing & music, even while still practicing full time dentistry in his private dental practice. To date he has published 15 books—and is currently a bass singer in choral singing at The Chorus of the People (180 choral singers), under the Voices of Singapore (VOS).*

## **A Tribute To Dr Ng Fooi Chin**

**By Dr Johnny Lee Moh Hiong**

Already a renowned OFM surgeon,  
there's little need to recount her many qualifications  
and achievements.

I came to know her more personally  
during our time together, serving  
on the SDA Standing Committee.  
She was kind, sincere,  
and always willing to help—  
honest to the core, and utterly reliable.

I deeply admired her encyclopedic mind.  
Off the cuff, she could quote articles, rules,  
regulations, even dates—checking  
her phone only to confirm details.  
She was refined and precise  
in speech and thought—  
always clear, confident, and composed.  
I felt entirely at ease with her—  
Sensitive and discreet, she would quietly whisper to me in Hakka,  
whenever the matter required confidentiality.

She had a gentle humour too—  
marked by her charming giggles,  
with a sweet, silver voice,  
that sang beautifully.  
I am truly honoured to be her friend.  
I miss her deeply—  
I only wish we had kept in touch more,  
after our time serving with the SDA, SDC, MOH, and its MP.

Fooi Chin inspired me—  
with her humility, her truthfulness,  
and the quiet perseverance  
that stood out all she did.  
She lived with integrity,  
We shared much about life—  
and what truly matters.  
I will always remember her sisterly care,  
her concern, her help,  
and her wise advice.

I now offer my heartfelt prayers  
for her, her loved ones, and her many friends—  
and will continue to do so.  
I am certain she is at peace.

**Dr Johnny Lee Moh Hiong**

23 June 2025  
(Year of 1973)

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# *In Loving Memory of Dr Ng Fooi Chin*

*By Dr Eugene Tang Kok Weng*



**D**r Ng Fooi Chin was a distinguished Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon whose professional accomplishments spoke for themselves. Yet, to those of us who were privileged to know her beyond the operating theatre, she will be remembered for far more than her impressive credentials.

I came to know Fooi Chin more personally during our time together on the SDA Standing Committee, when we were addressing the Certificate of Competence (CoC) issue proposed by the SDC. She was kind, sincere, and always ready to lend her support—honest to the core and unwaveringly dependable. This compassionate side of Fooi Chin shone even more brightly during our

overseas medical missions under the Tzu Chi Foundation, where her selflessness and quiet strength left lasting impressions on all who served with her.

Her intellect was exceptional. She could recall articles, regulations, and key dates with remarkable ease—consulting her phone only for confirmation. She spoke with calm clarity and precision, her composure steadying those around her. In her presence, one always felt an inner peace.

Discreet and thoughtful, she would sometimes whisper in Hakka when sensitivity was needed—always respectful, always graceful.

Her gentle humour, her bright giggles, and that silvery voice—once filled with the warmth of song—remain etched in

memory. It was this blend of intellect, humility, and quiet fortitude that inspired and endeared her to so many.

We often shared reflections on life—on what truly mattered. I will always remember her sisterly care, her wisdom, and her quiet generosity of spirit.

Fooi Chin lived with integrity. Her presence enriched every circle she was part of—whether with the SDA, the SDC, or the many professional committees she served on. I only wish we had kept in closer touch after those meaningful years together.

She is deeply missed.

I offer my heartfelt prayers for her, her loved ones, and all whose lives she touched.

May she rest in eternal peace.

# Dental Perfection, the Patient's Enemy of Good

By Dr Clara Gibson

**T**he quest for perfection, in terms of facial and dental appearance, is ever increasing.

The demand however, is very often patient-driven. Patient's expectations are getting higher and higher, with less willingness to accept anything less than a 'perfect' result. The omnipresence of slick, filtered social media combined with the increasing online presence of all of us has made patients more image-conscious. A significant number of patients present with dental concerns "after seeing themselves on online

calls and meetings", having historically had no dental aesthetic concerns nor any particular interest in having an 'online persona'.

There is no doubt that some of this is good. That non-vital darkened central incisor is treated, or the inter-proximal anterior caries restored. The ideal patient is one who has realistic expectations—they see the problem, understand the treatment aims and limitations and are appreciative of the high quality dentistry that they receive. The challenge for dentists is when a nice clinical outcome is achieved, but the patient is not happy.

The old adage of good communication and thorough informed consent is very familiar to us as clinicians. But increasingly, it seems that this may not be enough. I know I cannot be the only clinician who has had the experience of: explaining treatment clearly, outlining, even drawing an image of the limitations, writing copious notes, completing judicious consent, achieving a favourable, as-predicted outcome only for the patient to return 'unhappy with the result'. But contrastingly, there are other cases where I would like to do a little more finishing, but the patient is perfectly content and volunteers a favourable online review.

What is it about certain patients that makes them more likely to be dissatisfied with the outcome, and ultimately potentially sue the clinician? Well, a 2014 study tried to find this out.

The study team discovered that in fact the patient's gender, economic status nor educational level did not correlate with the likelihood of them litigating. Older, more religious patients were less likely to sue. Interestingly, the one biggest predictor of the likelihood of a patient suing their clinician was: a higher expectation of information during a medical consultation. In other words, the patient who asks a lot more questions than typical at the consultation appointment, books multiple repeat consultation appointments to ask more questions before proceeding, continues to raise many questions throughout the treatment and generally seems dissatisfied with the answers which they receive. It was found that these patients with a higher than usual need for information before and during their treatment, tended to have higher levels of stress and anxiety. Patients with high anxiety levels tended to be highly reliant on, and have an almost relentless and obsessive pursuit about the information that they require

*I'm sorry but I don't think that I am the best person to carry out your treatment...*

from a clinician. So it is even more frustrating when it is these patients who are dissatisfied at the end. As often it will have required many more consultation appointments, explanations and reassurance throughout.

Recognising the patients that are more likely to be unhappy at the end, steps can be taken to mitigate against this. In some cases, I will just spend significant additional time explaining, documenting, drawing diagrams while in the clinic and then follow up with the patient, in writing and with diagrams, what was discussed. As a clinician, you can stand firm in your clinical experience and evidence-based practice but it undeniably frustrating having to continually justify yourself at each appointment. Working in clinical practice is a learning curve, and it is not necessarily the clinical skills that are the road blocks. Recognising this type of patient allows me, someday, to take the more peaceful route, *I'm sorry but I don't think that I am the best person to carry out your treatment...*



**Dr Clara Gibson**  
*is dentist from Ireland who limits her work to orthodontic treatment. She spends her free time enjoying the sunny weather by cycling and running around the island.*

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# ***Beyond the Drill: Why Dentists Are Seeking Fulfilment Outside the Clinic***

*By Dr Damini Chawla*

In dental school, we are trained to perfect our margins, adjust our occlusion, and measure success in millimeters. But what happens when the clinical boxes are all ticked, and yet, something inside still feels unfulfilled?

A quiet shift is happening in our profession. Dentists are turning to photography, writing, yoga, startups, and stand-up comedy—not just for recreation, but for restoration. For many, the problem isn't the profession itself. It's the single-mindedness with which it has come to define us.

## **The Case of the One-Dimensional Identity**

Dentistry, by design, demands intensity. We commit in our late teens, build our lives around a narrow set of skills, and enter a highly structured, high-stakes workforce by our mid-twenties. And for a while, it works.

*Until it doesn't.*

For some, this shift comes after burnout. For others, after the realization that they've become excellent at a job they never gave themselves permission to outgrow. It's what psychologists call identity foreclosure—when

we prematurely commit to a role without exploring others. Dentists are particularly vulnerable because our profession is so all-consuming, so neatly wrapped in societal validation, that stepping outside it can feel both radical and irresponsible.

*But what if it's neither?*

In Singapore, a recent study using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory found that over 11% of dentists report high to severe personal burnout, with additional signs of rising emotional fatigue across the profession.<sup>1</sup> That's more than 1 in 10 practitioners quietly running on empty.

## Hobbies as a Form of Healing

There is mounting evidence that creative and non-clinical pursuits are not indulgences—they're mental health strategies. A 2022 study in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* showed that professionals who engage in a non-work identity experience significantly lower rates of burnout and anxiety.<sup>2</sup> In the context of healthcare, where emotional fatigue is rampant, hobbies become more than hobbies. They become lifelines.

Whether it's painting, teaching, gardening, or DJing—these pursuits offer something dentistry can't: freedom from perfection. Permission to be messy, curious, and unproductive. Ironically, this very looseness sharpens our presence back at the chairside.

## My Own Mirror Moment

For years, I defined myself solely as a clinician. Dentistry was not just what I did—it was who I was. But after becoming a mother, losing parts of myself to burnout, and quietly mourning the dreams I hadn't explored, I began to write. Not just dental papers or CPD reflections—but personal essays, poetry, even a book. At first, it felt like a betrayal.

But then, it felt like a return.

The strange thing is, pursuing something beyond dentistry didn't make me less committed to the profession. It made me more human in it.

## The Permission We Didn't Know We Needed

There is a hidden cost to staying small in our roles: resentment, stagnation, disconnection. And yet so many dentists delay pursuing a second interest until they "have more time," "make partner," or "retire." But what if we flipped the script?

What if exploring joy outside dentistry wasn't a threat to our professional identity, but the thing that actually sustains it?

We are allowed to be more than dentists. We are allowed to evolve. In fact, we must. Because when our own lives are rich with meaning, we bring that fullness into every patient interaction, every team huddle, every tough day.

So pick up the paintbrush. Sign up for that storytelling class. Start the side hustle. Not because dentistry is broken—but because you're allowed to be whole.



*Dr Damini Chawla graduated from the University of Western Australia and has practised in Singapore for over a decade. She advocates for compassionate, human-centred dentistry.*

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1. Chua, L. J., Sriranganathan, D., et al. (2021). Burnout among dentists in Singapore: a cross-sectional study using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. *Singapore Dental Journal*, 42, 30–35. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34602256>
2. Ruderman, M. N., et al. (2022). Nonwork identities and professional well-being: An overlooked resource in high-burnout fields. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 27(1), 38–50.

Image by Elina Arāja, pexel.com

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# *Graduate Diploma in Dental Implantology: Why Did I Choose To Do It?*

## *An interview with Dr Huang Shiming*

*By Dr Yeoh Eng Seng*

**I**n the rapidly advancing dental industry, the significance of continuing education is paramount. For professionals such as Dr Huang Shiming, Chief Technology Officer at TP Dental Surgeons, staying informed about the latest developments is crucial. Despite managing a demanding schedule that includes both clinical practice and administrative duties, Dr Huang chose to pursue a Graduate Diploma in Dental Implantology at the National University of Singapore. This article will explore his motivations for furthering his education, the challenges he encountered in balancing his various responsibilities, and the impact of his new expertise on his dental practice.

We will examine the key factors that drive Dr Huang's commitment to lifelong learning and his dedication to delivering high-quality care to his patients.

*To start, could you please share a bit about yourself, your training background, and your current dental practice?*

Born and bred in Singapore, I obtained my Bachelors of Dental Surgery from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2011.

After serving the full undergraduate bond with the Ministry of Health Holdings (MOHH) at various institutions, I was fortunate enough to be offered the opportunity to join TP Dental Surgeons where



I still practice till this day. It is a multidisciplinary practice located in the Ngee Ann City Penthouse overlooking Orchard Road with almost thirty General Dentists and Specialists working together under one roof.

After a fair bit of time in private practice, I decided to bite the bullet and return to school for further studies, completing the Graduate Diploma in Dental Implantology (GDDI) program in 2024.

**Did you always aspire to be a dentist while growing up?**

In a word, no. The first job I ever aspired to was to be the President of Singapore. Probably not the answer you were looking for! Call it the naiveté of youth.

**What led you to choose a career in dentistry?**

Pour yourself a drink, this is quite a long story but I will try to keep it brief!

I never told this during my undergraduate admission interviews because I was too busy regurgitating model answers but now is as good a time as any.

In secondary school (long after my Presidential aspirations had expired), I used to represent the school team in competitive Softball and unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, suffered a training accident where all my

maxillary incisors picked and lost a fight to a wild softball—which was not soft at all.

Turning up at the Singapore General Hospital emergency room with four laterally luxated incisors and mouth full of blood, I first met Dr Marlene Teo who happened to be the Dental Officer on call at the time. With great effort, she repositioned and splinted my teeth and this was then followed by the long months of frequent recalls with her at the National Dental Centre (NDC) for sensibility tests and radiographic reviews.

At each visit, I saw how much she enjoyed her work and how seamlessly the team functioned. It was actually a rather inspiring sight for an otherwise aimless teen to witness. This started me thinking for the first ever time about dentistry as a career.

At this point I could say the rest was history but that would not do this story justice.

She and I would eventually part ways as I was discharged from the NDC recalls but almost a decade later during my dental freshman orientation, who other than Assistant Professor Marlene to serendipitously host me on the faculty tour! Of course, she would remember the boy with the bloody mouth and four retroclined incisors.

Yet another decade later, I now consider her a big sister and mentor. Yes, she is still my

dentist and yes my maxillary incisors are all still present and vital thanks to her.

**Could you tell us about your first few years in your early career?**

Before entering into private practice I did the whole gamut of MOHH DOPEX postings ranging from polyclinics to hospitals as well as the Singapore Armed Forces. It allowed me to practice both community dentistry and advanced general dentistry in so many different settings, treating many different socioeconomic groups. I also had the good fortune during this time to encounter numerous nurturing supervisors, some of whom I am still in touch with till this day. Not getting out of the bond early was probably one of the best decisions in the formative years of my career.

**Do you have a specific area of interest in your practice? Has implant dentistry become your primary focus since the program?**

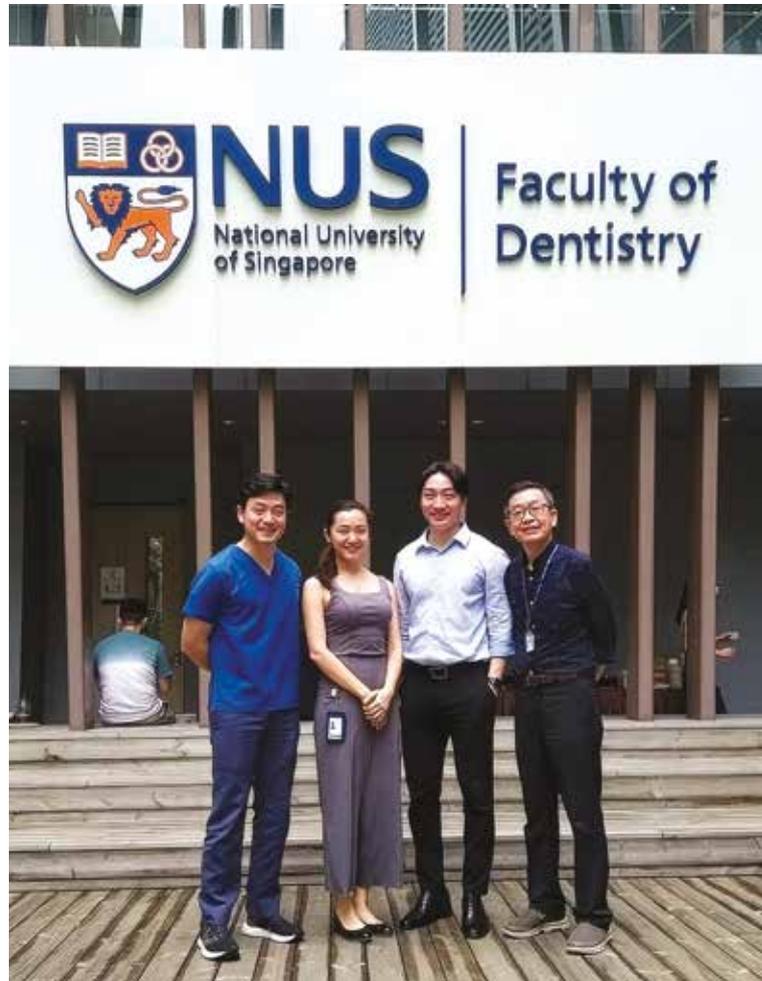
I do not limit my work to any particular discipline as such. The beauty of being in a multidisciplinary practice is that I get to work on complex cases together with a lot of brilliant colleagues through cross referrals and execute comprehensive treatment plans that I would otherwise not be able to manage to as high a degree alone.

While implant cases may not have become my sole focus since the program, I do keenly take on more advanced cases now which I would have otherwise passed on before and I am definitely a lot more self-critical of my treatment processes and outcomes. A higher standard of documentation and introspective analysis of my own implant cases is also something I credit the program for.

**In addition to clinical practice, do you hold any administrative roles or have any side ventures?**

Beyond clinical practice, I am actively involved in practice management and currently serve as the CTO of our clinic which in many ways has been equal parts daunting and fulfilling. Being tasked with the modernisation of a practice as large as TP with more than 50 years of rich history is not without distinct challenges but it does keep the day to day constantly interesting. I do sometimes miss being in the “associate bubble” where I could come and do my work and then hang up my tools without a care. However, being involved in the steering of such an eminent and storied dental practice is certainly a unique privilege that I count myself fortunate to have.

Outside of work, in 2018, I also founded and manage a group called The Makan Run. It is not so much a side venture



but rather a passion project together with a community of likeminded individuals. We organise and execute bespoke high octane driving and motorsports escapades beyond the borders of Singapore and in more recent years have also added snowboarding adventures to our repertoire. Being unaffiliated to any other club or brands, our member base is by invitation only and this allows us to keep the group tight and right.

**Before enrolling in the Graduate Diploma in Implant Dentistry (GDDI) program, how did you begin your journey in implant dentistry?**

Given the luxury of a multidisciplinary practice like ours, I truly had no shortage of guidance from colleagues who can perhaps also be considered household names in implant dentistry. Dr Marlene Teo (yes we were also colleagues in private practice) was very

supportive in getting me started on my first few cases. Professor Dominic Leung has also greatly shaped my implant journey both before and during the GDDI program and his mind continues to be a vast throve of knowledge that I frequently pick at - given that he sits just across from me in our office. The things that he has forgotten about implant dentistry, I have yet to even learn!

**What motivated you to pursue the GDDI program despite your success?**

I would hardly consider myself "successful" as the road that lies ahead is still long. There is much to learn and much to do and I am nowhere close to where I would like to be in my professional life but hope to get there one day.

The main driving force for my pursuit of further education perhaps stems from the desire to do better and to hold myself accountable to a higher standard. When you have been in the game for a while, it is easy to get overly comfortable or even complacent. Just because one has done something a certain way for many years without issue might not necessarily mean that it is the best or even proper thing to do.

I do not limit my work to any particular discipline as such. The beauty of being in a multidisciplinary practice is that I get to work on complex cases together with a lot of brilliant colleagues...

The world is much larger than our own clinical practice and while we all like to think we are on top of things, truly there is so much that we will always be unaware of. I wanted to uncover more of my unknown-unknowns and told Professor Keson Tan as much during the GDDI admissions interviews.

I am not sure if this worked for or against me though. For anyone reading and considering the program, entering into an interview and owning up to being an ignoramus might not be the best takeaway from this!

**How did you prepare yourself for the enrolment?**

I met up with one of the said nurturing supervisors from my dental officer days in polyclinics. Being a GDDI alumnus herself, Dr Serene Wu gave me the nitty gritty over a lengthy coffee session on what to expect and how to prepare for the program. In fact she was even kind enough to screen and refer to me my first suitable GDDI case.

In typical Serene fashion though, she probably breezed through the program because I certainly had a more trying time getting through it than what she had related it to be like for herself.

**What was it like going back to dental school after being out for so long?**

Adjusting to student life was quite seamless to be honest. Given that I was a product of the NUS undergraduate program, a certain ingrained muscle memory kicked in when I returned to school. It helped greatly that I already understood the teaching style and lesson format as well as the expectations that the faculty would have of us.

The hard part was managing my time and balancing commitments. Given a full clinical schedule in private practice as well as the practice management aspects of it, splitting focus to also attend GDDI didactic sessions, prepare for and present at Treatment

Planning Seminars and Literature Reviews and also book in and carry out surgical and restorative sessions in the GDDI clinics was at times overwhelming. To keep so many plates spinning, I constantly felt like I was getting pulled in many different directions all at once without the bandwidth to excel in any single one of them. There were too many burnt weekends and dawn till dusk days to count—not to mention the opportunity cost of closing clinics to attend classes during the week. Pile on social and familial commitments and you have the ingredients of a perfect storm.

My suffering was certainly not unique though. Any GDDI alumni that took the program whilst maintaining a full private clinical schedule or running their own business has likely gone through the same experience and the knowledge of this kept me fuelled to keep ploughing on.

I still wonder till today if perhaps a full time program would be easier to manage without having to wear so many hats—not that I intend to find out anytime soon!

**Do you have any tips for balancing work and academic commitments?**

After a fashion, I learnt to pick my battles. Having tried to fight too many fires at the beginning, I realised that certain fires can be left to burn. There is a season for everything. I adapted to become a lot more flexible



with how I spent my time and energy and also learnt to listen to my body and prioritise rest when needed, even if this meant closing my private clinical sessions or forgoing a surgical slot in faculty. You cannot pour from an empty cup.

**What is the main difference between the GDDI program and the previous courses you attended for implant dentistry?**

Having experienced both forms of formal instruction, I can say with, hopefully, as little bias as possible that all these brand affiliated or society organised implant courses held over a weekend or several weekends are wonderful for an introduction to implants but truly cannot compare to the breadth and depth of education and exposure that one can expect of a GDDI program.

Simply, the rigour of the didactic sessions and literature reviews alone are already hard to match. Not to mention the real-time close supervision for all surgical and restorative procedures performed in the faculty.

Personally however, the biggest difference to me was the opportunity to interact with all the people in and around the program.

Postgraduate residents from the Oral Surgery, Periodontic and Prosthodontic programs would take the implant didactics and the literature reviews alongside the GDDI cohort. To exchange ideas and to tap into their knowledge was invaluable and many lasting friendships were also forged over my two years with them.

Being in constant orbit of the illustrious list of professors and

adjunct lecturers who took us during the program might also perhaps be considered to have been of even greater value than the actual coursework itself with many pearls of wisdom imparted through their combined centuries of experience.

Every encounter in the program has the potential to be a meaningful learning opportunity if one is willing to make the most of it and all of this is truly difficult to replicate with any other instruction format or in any other setting.

**What's your advice regarding work-life balance and physical well-being?**

I am very lucky to have a wife that was empathetic to the demands of my work and graduate study endeavour. She remained supportive through my many evenings and weekends of either physical or mental absence and this allowed me the space and time to recalibrate whenever I needed to. In many ways, I felt safe to be my worst self around her so that I could be my best self elsewhere.

Keeping physically active also helped immensely. As they say "healthy body, healthy mind". Despite a taxing schedule, I would try to keep up with regular strength-endurance training at my usual gym Metamorfitus and would

even have my GDDI course mates join me there from time to time. Together with some of the postgraduate residents, we would also hit up the bouldering gym nearby after classes or clinics for lighthearted climbing sessions in true "work hard, play hard" fashion.

**Finally, do you have any advice for prospective applicants to the program?**

If you are just starting out in your career (assuming you have met the requisite admissions criteria), it is a great time to apply. Not having to split your professional focus and time in too many different directions will be a huge asset to you in your GDDI journey.

If you perhaps have procrastinated a bit and have been in the game for more than a decade like me, it is still a great time to apply. The added clarity and understanding that comes with a certain level of experience was a boon in my own GDDI journey.

If you are thinking about it, do it. It will never be the absolute perfect time and the best time to start is yesterday.

I entered into this program with eyes open and left it with no regrets. I am thankful that I made the risible decision to go back to school after all this time and if given another chance I would still do it all over again.



***Dr Yeoh Eng Seng**  
is a dental surgeon with a  
graduate diploma in dental  
implantology and a strong  
passion for surgery.*

# Ethics Forum 2025: Emerging Trends in Dental Complaints

By Dr Eugene Tang Kok Weng

**O**n 27 September 2025, the Singapore Dental Association (SDA) held its Ethics Forum at ISCA House, themed “Emerging Trends in Dental Complaints.” The half-day programme was jointly delivered by

distinguished speakers from the Singapore Dental Council (SDC), the Singapore Dental Association, and dentolegal experts, offering participants valuable insights into the evolving landscape of dental complaints and professional accountability.

## Opening Session—Mediation and Complaint Classification

The forum commenced with Dr Yao Xu, a seasoned emcee, who greeted participants with warmth and seamlessly introduced the speakers, creating an engaging start to the day's proceedings.

Dr Pua Hong Ping, Chairperson of SDA's Ethics and Practice Management Committee, opened the forum with a detailed overview of SDA's mediation process and protocols. He emphasised how early intervention through mediation can prevent escalation, and shared case examples—including frivolous complaints—that illustrated the challenges faced by practitioners. His talk also highlighted the importance of communication and consent, and he concluded with an introduction to SDA's classification framework for complaints.





### **Understanding the Role of the Regulator**

A/Prof Patrick Tseng, President of the SDC, followed with a comprehensive presentation on the role and function of SDC's various committees. He outlined the responsibilities of the Complaints Committee, Disciplinary Committee, Health Committee, and Interim Orders Committee, clarifying how each body protects the public while ensuring fairness to practitioners. His overview gave the audience a clear understanding of the processes that underpin Singapore's regulatory framework.



### **Complaint Trends and Case Studies**

Dr Goh Siew Hor, Council Member of the SDC, Past President of the SDA, and President of the Singapore Dental Health Foundation, then presented a series of anonymised case studies handled by the Complaints Committee. Drawing on his extensive experience, Dr Goh highlighted recurring themes in complaints and linked them to the ethical principles enshrined in the SDC's Ethical Guidelines. His talk underscored the profession's responsibility to uphold integrity while learning from past cases.



The tea break provided an opportunity for participants to connect, exchange notes, and share greetings, all within a lively and convivial setting.

### **Dentolegal Insights— Communication Models**

The session then welcomed Dr George Wright, Dentolegal Consultant and Deputy Dental Director at Dental Protection, who replaced Dr James Forster on the programme. Dr Wright, who has extensive experience supporting dentists across Asia, provided an overview of the typical complaints handled by Dental Protection. He introduced participants to the CLEAR model, designed to improve dentist-patient communication, and the ASSIST model, a structured approach for engaging with patients following an adverse outcome. His talk underscored how effective communication remains central to complaint prevention and resolution.



### **Facing the Disciplinary Tribunal**

The final lecture was delivered by Senior Counsel Kuah Boon Theng, Honorary Legal Advisor to SDA and Managing Director of Legal Clinic LLC. In her session, “Facing the Prospects of a Disciplinary Tribunal: How to Prepare When it Comes,” she described the daunting reality of appearing before a tribunal on charges of professional misconduct. She outlined the practical steps for preparation: understanding the charges, gathering and organising evidence, and anticipating cross-examination. Her practical advice aimed to help practitioners face the process with clarity and resilience.





**Dr Eugene  
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*Organizing Chairman,  
IDEM (International Dental  
Exhibition and Meeting, 2016*

*Dental Convenor,  
Tzu Chi International Medical  
Association  
(TIMA Singapore)*

*Chairman,  
SDA Standing Committee  
(dealing with  
CoC related matters)*

*Director,  
Aesthetic Dental Care  
Pte Ltd*

### **Panel Discussion**

The forum concluded with a lively panel discussion moderated by SDA President Dr Eugene Tang, who drew together the different perspectives presented. Panelists reflected on common complaint themes, regulatory safeguards, communication strategies, and legal preparation, before taking questions from the audience. The discussion reinforced the central message of the forum: that complaint management is best addressed through a combination of sound communication, early mediation, robust regulatory processes, and legal readiness.

### **Conclusion**

The Ethics Forum 2025 succeeded in fostering a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of dental complaints. By bringing together voices from SDA, SDC, Dental Protection, and the legal community, the event underscored the importance of collaboration in safeguarding patient trust while supporting practitioners in their professional journey.





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# *Before the Bitewing: Reclaiming the Human in Dentistry*

By Dr Damini Chawla

She wasn't afraid of the injection. She was afraid no one would ask why she stopped smiling.

We're trained to notice calculus, crowding, caries—but sometimes we forget to notice the person sitting in the chair. Not the patient. The person.

In a profession built on precision, speed, and systems, human connection can feel like a luxury. But it's not. It's the quiet cornerstone of everything we do.

## **The Clinical Illusion of Efficiency**

Dentistry often celebrates efficiency as excellence. The faster we move, the more we "achieve." But something gets lost in the rush: relationship.

Patients can sense when they're seen as a checklist. They may not know how to articulate it—but they feel it. And over time, so do we.

Burnout isn't just caused by overwork. It's also caused by disconnection. When we're stuck in transactional loops—procedure, payment, repeat—we start to feel like machines ourselves. And no one enters this field to become a machine.

## **The Evidence for Human-First Dentistry**

The data backs what we already know intuitively: human connection improves outcomes. A 2023 review in the Journal of Dental Research found that strong patient-provider communication is linked to

better treatment adherence, fewer missed appointments, and even reduced pain perception.<sup>1</sup>

Another study out of Australia found that when dentists took even 2–3 extra minutes to listen, explain, and empathize, patient satisfaction scores increased by over 40%, and trust in treatment plans rose substantially.<sup>2</sup>

And yet, this isn't taught in most dental schools. We're assessed on technical finesse, not relational intelligence.

## **Seeing the Person Behind the Problem**

A woman who hasn't smiled in a decade. A teenager afraid to open his mouth in school photos. A father who's been

*Human-first isn't "soft." It's smart. It's science-backed.*

putting off a root canal because he's busy putting everyone else first.

Behind every diagnosis is a deeper story. And when we take the time to listen—really listen—we treat more than teeth. We treat fear. Shame. History.

And that, too, is dentistry.

**Connection Doesn't Mean More Time—It Means More Intention**

The best part? Being human-first doesn't require 30-minute consultations or handwritten letters. It just requires intention.

- Making eye contact before gloving up.
- Asking one question that has nothing to do with teeth.
- Mirroring a patient's language when explaining treatment.
- Using silence to create space, not pressure.



These are small shifts with big ripples.

**The Payoff for the Practitioner**

Let's not pretend this is only about patients. Connection heals us too.

When we slow down enough to be present, we reawaken the purpose that brought us here. We feel less robotic, less resentful, more fulfilled. We start remembering—not just why we chose this path, but who we are while walking it.

**A New Standard of Care**

It's time to redefine clinical excellence. Not as how perfectly we prep or how fast we finish—but how deeply we connect while doing it.

Human-first isn't "soft." It's smart. It's science-backed. And it's the one thing AI, automation, and aligners can't replicate.

In a world that's increasingly digital and disconnected, the courage to be fully present might just be the most radical thing we can do. So before you reach for the bitewing, reach out to connect with the human.

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# **SDA Convention 2025:** **A Celebration of Networking, Innovation and Collaboration**

By A/Prof Intekhab Islam

The Singapore Dental Association (SDA) Convention 2025, held on 5–6 April 2025 at the Orchard Hotel Singapore, concluded as a resounding success—a remarkable convergence of clinicians, educators, researchers, and industry leaders united by a common vision to advance the art and science of dentistry. Guided by the theme “Dentistry Today: Embracing Change, Driving Progress, Pushing Frontiers,” this year’s convention reaffirmed the profession’s collective commitment to innovation, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

## **A Distinguished Opening and a Tribute to Leadership**

The convention opened with a warm Welcome Address by SDA President Dr Eugene Tang, who underscored the importance of professional resilience and adaptability in a rapidly evolving dental landscape. He called upon practitioners to embrace digital transformation, evidence-based care, and inter-professional collaboration to meet future healthcare challenges.



This was followed by an inspiring Opening Address by the Guest of Honour, Adj. Prof. (Dr) Raymond Chua, who commended the SDA’s continued leadership in professional development and its crucial role in fostering excellence within Singapore’s dental community.

A highlight of the ceremony was the induction of A/Prof. Patrick Tseng into the SDA Roll of Honour, in recognition of his exemplary contributions to dentistry, education, and public service. His work in clinical excellence and mentorship has left an enduring legacy across the region.

## **Scientific Programme: Two Days of Insight, Innovation, and Exchange**

The scientific programme, meticulously curated by the Organising Committee offered delegates an exceptional breadth of topics that reflected the future of modern dentistry.

### **Day 1 Highlights**

The academic sessions began with the first keynote lecture by A/Prof. Patrick Tseng, titled “The Changing Face of Endodontics—Current Trends and Changing Philosophies.” His presentation set a high bar for the convention, illustrating how evolving technologies and refined biological understanding continue to transform endodontic treatment philosophies, improving precision and predictability in patient outcomes.

He was followed by Dr Adrian Saurajen, who spoke on the role of dentists in the recognition and management of obstructive sleep apnoea, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration between dentistry and sleep medicine.



The mid-morning sessions featured Dr John Loh on early detection and management of oral cancer, and Dr Christopher Sim on pushing surgical and prosthetic boundaries in full-arch implant rehabilitation.

In the afternoon, Prof. Philip Martin McLoughlin's lecture "As Plain As the Nose on Your Face" reminded clinicians of their vital role in recognising facial skin cancers. Adj. A/Prof. Loh Kai Woh followed with time-saving orthodontic techniques, and Dr Ronnie Yap delivered a powerful talk on "The Ugly Side of Dental Veneers," highlighting complications, ethics, and the dangers of unlicensed practice. Dr Matthew Wong debunked seven myths surrounding digital dentistry, while Dr Lai Juen Bin and Dr Gerald Tan closed the academic programme with an

The mid-morning session, themed around Artificial Intelligence in Dentistry, featured Dr Hamed Fesharaki, Dr Bao Truong, and Dr James Foster, who together explored AI's applications in diagnostics, education, and ethics—from cognitive training tools to medicolegal considerations in AI-assisted care.

The afternoon programme shifted focus to clinical excellence. Dr John Tay presented on root resective therapy in periodontics, Dr Myra Elliott addressed antibiotic stewardship, and Dr Ng Choon Yau and Dr Kenneth Lew discussed the boundaries and indications for clear aligner therapy. The day concluded with Dr Tong Huei Jinn's session on behaviour management strategies for the "Generation Alpha" child, drawing strong engagement from attendees interested in paediatric dentistry.

### Day 2 Highlights

Day 2, chaired by Dr Jessalynn Sukamto and Dr Bertrand Chew, continued with equally stimulating content. Dr Yue Weng Cheu opened with an enlightening lecture on sleep-related breathing disorders, followed by Prof. Peter Svensson's in-depth exploration of TMD and myalgia.





**Behind the Scenes:  
Meticulous Organisation  
and Teamwork**

The smooth execution of the convention was the result of the Organising Committee's careful planning and the dedication of numerous volunteers. Under the leadership of Chairperson A/Prof Intekhab Islam and Co-Chair Dr Boey Sean Kuan, the teams managing scientific programming, trade liaison, registration, venue coordination, and audiovisual logistics ensured that every aspect ran flawlessly. The SDA Secretariat and student volunteers played an indispensable role in creating a welcoming, professional environment throughout the two-day event.



inspiring lecture on teamwork between oral surgeons and general dentists in implant therapy—epitomising the spirit of collaborative practice.

Exhibitors praised the convention's professional organisation and strong delegate engagement, noting that the SDA Convention continues to be one of Singapore's most valuable platforms for industry partnership and product showcase.

**Trade Exhibition: Showcasing Innovation and Collaboration**

Running in parallel with the lectures, the trade exhibition transformed the Orchard Hotel ballroom into a dynamic hub of industry innovation. Over 35 leading exhibitors—including Colgate Palmolive, GC Asia, Carl Zeiss, BioHorizons Camlog, Haleon, Kenvue, Osstem, Megagen, Invisalign, and Solventum—showcased state-of-the-art products, digital workflows, and materials that are redefining clinical practice.

Delegates explored cutting-edge technology first-hand, from digital scanning systems to AI-enhanced software, engaging directly with manufacturers and distributors. The Trade Tour, led by SDA leadership and the Guest of Honour, featured interactive booth visits that highlighted innovation and fostered meaningful dialogue between clinicians and industry partners.





### Closing Reflections

SDA Convention 2025 achieved an outstanding balance between academic discourse and industry engagement, reinforcing the Association’s mission to advance dentistry through knowledge, technology, and community.

As the event drew to a close, participants expressed immense appreciation for the quality of the programme and the collegial atmosphere that defined the weekend. The convention not only celebrated progress within Singapore’s dental

fraternity but also reaffirmed SDA’s commitment to leading conversations that shape the profession across the region.

Building on the momentum and partnerships forged during this convention, attention now turns to IDEM 2026, which will be held at Marina Bay Sands from 17–19 April 2026. As the leading dental exhibition and conference in the Asia-Pacific region, IDEM 2026 will once again bring together global experts, innovators, and practitioners to share ideas, explore technology, and push the frontiers of dentistry.



*A/Prof. Intekhab Islam is a Senior Consultant in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore, and an Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. He serves as Chair of the Total Workplace Safety and Health Committee and is deeply involved in dental education innovation, curriculum development, and professional training. His work integrates clinical practice with digital learning and simulation-based education to enhance the next generation of dental professionals.*

# *The Power of Pets—is it Time for a Therapy Dog?*

*By Dr Clara Gibson*

**G**rowing up in the countryside in Ireland, animals were firmly left outside. The border collies were cute, but muddy working dogs on the farm. I liked horse-riding, but the boots and horse hair had to be left at the back door when I came inside. I was always a bit sceptical of the so-called therapeutic benefit of pets. Until I worked in a children's hospital in London. An 8-year-old patient who had undergone a maxillary resection was understandably nervous to get into the dental chair. So Bingo the hospital therapy dog was bleeped and shortly after, trotted into my clinic room. He hopped up on the dental chair, lying across

the patient. And suddenly, all was calm. 'He acts like a weighted blanket', the hospital play specialist told me, 'but with more emotional real-time feedback'. Sounds like we all need a Bingo in our lives, I thought.

Interacting with animals has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol and reduce blood pressure. Interestingly though, some studies have shown that while the human's cortisol levels decrease during a pet-human interaction, the dog's cortisol levels actually increase. For both parties though, an increase in oxytocin is found. Other studies have demonstrated that animals can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and improve mood.

Dog therapy and ownership are being investigated regarding their impact on disease symptoms in various neurological disorders. Mood, quality of life and symptoms were reported to improve in patients with disorders such as stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and more. Dogs provide benefits both in terms of emotional support, medical alerting and also the encouragement of physical activity, which was shown to provide positive benefits in diseases associated with skeletal muscle apoptosis, such as Huntington's disease. Therefore, they could have a role both in terms of improvement in patient's symptoms, quality of life and also the disease course itself.

Dentistry is a particularly stressful aspect of healthcare for patients, with studies showing that anything up to 70% of patients have some level of dental anxiety. Although techniques such as sedation and general anaesthesia help, they don't prevent the recurrence of anxiety for subsequent appointments. This is something that therapy dogs have been shown to help with. And while the prospect of having a dog roaming around a dental clinic does pose challenges for cross-infection, sharps injuries and perhaps general chaos, having seen it in action in a hospital setting, it is clear that it definitely can work.

I looked after a friend's pug for a week and it did change my perspective on pet therapy. I was amazed by how many people came up to talk to me when out walking, mainly just to say hello to Butter, but I

*'is it ok that the dog just ate a tube of mango lip balm?!'*

instantly understood how a dog could help those suffering with social isolation or loneliness. Looking after an indoor pet was a bit of steep learning curve, involving a few panicked messages to my vet friend *'is it ok that the dog just ate a tube of mango lip balm?!'*. (Yes, it was, for those who are wondering). Turns out that pugs may be a bit slow when walking but they have no issues with climbing up high if there might be food involved.

So all that to say that I am hereby declaring myself open to dog-sit. I promise that there will be no more lip balm left within reach.



**Dr Clara Gibson**  
*is dentist from Ireland who limits her work to orthodontic treatment. She spends her free time enjoying the sunny weather by cycling and running around the island.*

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Image by Emil Priver, unsplash.com

# *Why Dental Health Promotion Still Matters in the Digital Age*

*By Secretary of SDHF*

In today's digital age, information about oral health is more accessible than ever before. Online platforms and social media channels are filled with advice on brushing techniques, dental products, and preventive care. However, despite this abundance of information, **oral diseases remain among the most prevalent chronic health conditions worldwide.** This reality underscores an important truth: **awareness does not automatically lead to behavioural change.** For this reason, the **Singapore Dental Health Foundation (SDHF)** continues to uphold its commitment to promoting good oral health through both digital and community-based initiatives. As the charity arm of the Singapore Dental Association, SDHF plays a vital role in ensuring that dental health education and services reach all segments of the population, including those who may not benefit from digital access.





### Promoting Oral Health Through Multiple Channels

SDHF adopts a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to dental health promotion. Through our **official website** ([www.dentalhealth.org.sg](http://www.dentalhealth.org.sg)), we provide credible, evidence-based information that helps the public make informed decisions about their oral health. The website also serves as a resource hub for dental professionals and

volunteers seeking to participate in community outreach programmes.

Beyond the digital sphere, SDHF actively engages with the community. We **conduct dental screenings at community centres** across Singapore, allowing individuals to receive free check-ups and early detection of potential dental problems. We also **deliver oral health talks at schools and elderly homes,**



ensuring that our educational messages are appropriately tailored to the needs of different age groups.

### Empowering the Dental Community

Recognising the crucial role of dental professionals in public education, SDHF **produces educational leaflets and materials** that dentists can distribute in their clinics. These materials reinforce key oral health messages and help bridge the gap between clinical advice and everyday practice.

The Foundation also **supports and coordinates volunteer dentists** who provide treatment at welfare home clinics, ensuring that vulnerable populations continue to receive quality care. We started the BDS Project back in the year 2000, to provide manpower and resources to the different welfare clinics all over Singapore. In addition, SDHF is proud to **support new volunteer initiatives such as LOLA Home Dental Services**, which mobilises dental professionals and students to bring dental care and compassion to underserved communities.

### The Enduring Value of Personal Engagement

While technology has expanded the reach of health education, the **human connection remains indispensable.** Personal interactions—



**health through education, outreach, and service.** By combining the reach of digital tools with the warmth of personal engagement, SDHF strives to ensure that every individual—regardless of age, background, or circumstance—has the opportunity to enjoy good oral health and a confident smile.

We hope to encourage more dentists to join our organization so that with more manpower, we can reach out to even more.

whether through a school talk, a screening event, or a consultation with a volunteer dentist—continue to have a profound and lasting impact. Such engagements foster trust, reinforce good habits, and build community awareness in ways that digital communication alone cannot achieve.

### Looking Ahead

As Singapore advances towards a more connected and technology-driven future, the Singapore Dental Health Foundation remains steadfast in its mission to **promote oral**

### Working Together to Create Greater Impact

The success of SDHF's initiatives depends greatly on the passion and commitment of the dental community. As we look to expand our programmes and reach even more Singaporeans, **we invite more dentists to join us**—whether by volunteering their time, contributing expertise, or supporting outreach activities. By working together, we can strengthen our collective impact, extend care to those most in need, and build a society that truly values oral health as an integral part of overall well-being.

## About the Singapore Dental Health Foundation (SDHF)

The Singapore Dental Health Foundation is the charitable arm of the Singapore Dental Association. Established to advance oral health awareness and promote good dental practices among the public, SDHF conducts community screenings, educational talks, and outreach programmes across Singapore. The Foundation also supports dentists and volunteers who provide dental care to welfare homes and underserved communities. Through its initiatives—both online and on the ground—SDHF remains committed to building a healthier and more informed society, one smile at a time.



# Game, Set, Smile. The Winning Connection Between Dentistry and Sports

By Dr Tammy Tan

**F**or dentists, the phrase "**occupational hazard**" isn't a theory—it's a chronic ache. Countless hours hunched over patients, our eyes in a tight focus, hands performing microscopic maneuvers, and backs perpetually engaged, make muscle pain one of the profession's most common adversaries. We diligently preach prevention to our patients, but what if the key to a long, pain-free career in dentistry isn't just about the right ergonomic stool? **What if it lies in stepping out of the clinic and onto the court?**

I've always found that movement fuels focus. My early years in sports taught me the value of discipline, body awareness, and laser-sharp focus which are qualities that translate surprisingly well to dentistry. These days, I still make time to stay active, whether it's hitting a few balls on the **tennis** court, enjoying a round of **golf**, or joining fellow dentists for the latest craze: **pickleball**.



## Yes, Pickleball!

If traditional sports feel too demanding, the rise of pickleball has created an unlikely yet perfect pairing for the dental community. It's low-impact, easy on the joints, and the barrier to entry is delightfully low—you don't need a decade of athletic training to jump in.

The Singapore Dental Association (SDA) hosts regular **Sunday night pickleball sessions**, drawing dentists of all ages. It's a remarkable showcase of intergenerational connection, where young practitioners rally alongside seniors who've navigated the profession for decades. The spirit of the game is pure camaraderie, best exemplified by our SDA pickleball team, "**The Bite Force**", where we competed in the Pesta Sukan Team Tournament. While a Pesta Sukan trophy might have eluded us, the laughter and shared joy were the real victories. Pickleball is an inclusive, non-straining way to unwind, move, and reconnect outside of the clinical setting.



**Dr Tammy Tan**  
graduated from NUS in  
2024 and was a former  
Singapore #1 tennis player  
and NUS sports scholarship  
holder. She is currently  
serving her bond  
with MOHH.



## Try Tennis!

Of course, as a tennis player at heart, I'll always champion the sport that taught me discipline, patience, and mental resilience. **Tennis** goes far beyond physical fitness—it sharpens focus, adaptability, and endurance, all of which are essential in dentistry, especially during long procedures or when faced with unexpected complications.

For those who've never played, getting started is easy. There are plenty of training clubs in Singapore which offer beginner classes or social sessions where you can learn the basics of tennis.



There's also **golf**, a personal favorite of mine. Though it may appear slow-paced, golf demands concentration, balance, and precision. The quiet focus required to execute the perfect swing, combined with the restorative peace of a lush green setting, offers a welcome reset from the intensity of the clinic.

To complement these sports, consider integrating body-centric workouts that directly address the profession's physical stressors.

**Yoga and Pilates** are great workouts to consider. They are fantastic for building flexibility and balance, which directly combats the tension that accumulates in the back and neck after long hours. The emphasis on stretching and controlled breathing techniques offers not just physical relief but also mental clarity.



Ultimately, sports are more than just recreation for dentists—they're an essential form of self-care. Dentistry demands precision and stamina. A strong, stable back and relaxed shoulders aren't luxuries—they're necessities. Physical activity prevents burnout, improves posture, and even sharpens mental focus. Just as we encourage our patients to maintain healthy habits, we too should invest in our own physical well-being.

So whether you're smashing serves on the tennis court, perfecting your swing on the golf course, or laughing through a pickleball rally on Sunday night—remember this: **A dentist who moves well, works well.**

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# ***Beyond Borders: A Conversation with Dr Paul Lim on the Heart of Dental Volunteering***

*By Dr Damini Chawla*

## **Introduction**

In 2011, I went on my first dental mission trip to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Fresh out of dental school and full of idealism, I was struck not just by the need, but by the spirit of the people we served. I returned again in 2013—but then life happened. Marriage, children, relocation, and a global pandemic put mission work on pause.

Returning this year—over a decade later—felt like a homecoming. While this was our first time visiting Solomon School, the essence of the

mission remained unchanged: connection, compassion, and care that transcends geography.

At the heart of it all was Dr Paul Lim—the steady hand and visionary behind Singapore's long-standing dental outreach efforts in the region. For years, Dr Lim has built bridges between communities in need and dental professionals ready to serve. In this conversation, we dive into his story—what led him to a life of service, how these missions have evolved, and what they continue to teach us about the kind of dentists—and people—we aspire to be.

## **A Life of Service: In Conversation with Dr Paul Lim**

*Let's start from the beginning—what was your childhood like, and when did you first think about becoming a dentist?*

My father was a businessman in decline and passed away when I was just five, leaving our family in debt. We grew up in poverty, but life improved when my elder brother started working in Australia. Dentistry wasn't part of the plan—it found me later.

**So how did dentistry become your chosen path?**

After my A Levels, my goal was to complete National Service and then head to Australia to study medicine. But I had a tough time in my army unit. During a school reunion, a classmate—then a first-year dental student—told me I could defer NS by enrolling in the dental faculty. My brother supported the idea, so I applied. I ended up in dental school somewhat “accidentally.” That decision changed everything—including meeting my wife there.

**What was dental school like?**

I enjoyed it. Our cohort worked hard but also looked out for each other—especially during the more difficult moments with certain faculty members. After graduation and NS, I realized institutional practice didn’t suit me. The politics didn’t sit well, so I went into private practice.

**When did volunteering shift from concept to calling?**

Since secondary school, I had been around Christian mission workers. After setting up my clinic, I was invited to support a mission in rural Myanmar. I connected deeply with the people there—their circumstances mirrored my own upbringing. That was the beginning of my journey in dental mission work.

**What inspired you to focus your efforts on Cambodia?**

After Myanmar, I joined friends on annual missions to Bintan under the Singapore Dental Association (SDA). These taught me the power of teamwork and the importance of proper sterilisation in the field.

In 2011, I was approached by Republic Polytechnic (RP) to co-run missions in Cambodia as part of their Service Learning Program. Their students joined our team, and the impact was extraordinary—some even went on to medical school because of that experience. Although RP eventually phased out the program, I continued the missions. The need never went away.

We’ve since built strong local partnerships in Cambodia—volunteers, dental students, translators. Our Singapore-based Oral Health Therapists (OHTs) have been crucial too, especially in logistics and clinic organisation.

**How did this year’s trip to Solomon School come about?**

One of our volunteers had an uncle involved with Solomon Independent School in Kampong Thom. He reached out, wondering if we’d consider running a mission there. No medical or dental teams had ever been. After a feasibility visit, we agreed. This year’s trip marked our first to the region.



“You’ll never save them all.”

**Is there a moment from your early missions that still stays with you?**

Yes—2016, in a fishing village called Kampong Khleang. The community was struggling due to depleted fish stocks. I remember a young girl in a worn school uniform, waiting quietly with her mother for treatment. Her face, her clothes—it was a powerful reminder of how much we take for granted back home.

**What role does volunteering play in a dentist’s professional life?**

To me, our skills are gifts—meant to serve. Volunteering is a way of giving thanks. Living in Singapore, we’re in a privileged position. Service reminds us not to take that for granted.

**How do you reconcile the limited impact we can make on such trips with the overwhelming need?**

I think about the story of the girl on the beach throwing starfish back into the sea. A passerby says, “You’ll never save them all.” She replies, “It matters to this one.” That’s my mindset. We do what we can. It’s far better than doing nothing.



What makes a mission trip truly meaningful—for both volunteers and recipients?

For volunteers, it's the satisfaction of knowing we've made a tangible difference. For the communities, I hope it signals that someone sees them, values them, and wants to help—even briefly.

What has surprised you the most about this work?

How hard our volunteers work. How passionately they serve. And how quickly strangers can become a team. That sense of camaraderie is something special.

What are some of the logistical or emotional challenges you face in organising these trips?

Customs is always a concern—bringing in supplies can attract scrutiny. Lately, we've started sourcing more materials locally to reduce risk. I'm especially thankful for our Cambodian colleagues who help us navigate those challenges.

Have you noticed any change in how younger dentists approach mission work today?

Not significantly. Young dentists tend to volunteer more before starting families. Many return once their children are older. The cycle continues, and that's heartening.

What role do you hope the SDA will continue to play in overseas mission work?

Publicity. We need to do more to promote these opportunities so dentists know they exist. Lack of awareness is the biggest barrier to participation.

What advice would you give to a dentist who wants to get involved but doesn't know where to start?

Reach out to the Singapore Dental Association. There are mission trips happening year-round. You don't have to go alone.



**Dr Damini Chawla**  
*graduated from the University of Western Australia and has practised in Singapore for over a decade. She advocates for compassionate, human-centred dentistry.*

How has this work shaped your own clinical practice in Singapore?

My approach is consistent—whether in a village or a private clinic. I try to provide the best treatment available, always considering what is practical and affordable for the patient in front of me.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind?

I hope more dentists are inspired to give back—through organising, participating, or supporting mission trips to communities that need us most.



## Closing Reflection

On this most recent trip, I was reminded once again that dentistry is not just about hand skills or technology—it's about being human. I met children who live on sugar water because they have no food. Children abandoned by parents working across the border. Children raised by neighbours and strangers.

And yet—they smiled, laughed, played. They welcomed us with open hearts.

Dr Paul Lim's leadership is a masterclass in quiet conviction. Mission work, in his hands, is not about charity—it's about solidarity. It's about presence. Listening. Serving without ego. And returning home changed in ways you didn't anticipate.

For me, this trip wasn't just a return to volunteering. It was a return to the heart of why I became a dentist in the first place.

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## *SDA x BYD Smile & Drive*

*By Dr Boey Sean Kuan ("SK")*

The **Singapore Dental Association** ("SDA") curated an inaugural "Smile & Drive" experience partnering **BYD Harmony Auto** for our members introducing an extensive fleet of BYD electric vehicles including the luxurious Denza.







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The SDA co-hosted an exclusive one-night only event (organised by Dr Boey Sean Kuan) with BYD at their showroom situated at 77 Robinson Road on 11 July 2025, right in the heart of the Central Business District.

It was a glamorous lifestyle event, made possible with the generous sponsorships by **FinGroup** (founded by Dr U-jin Chow), a leading one-stop healthcare consultancy firm and **H-Kore**, Singapore's only Lagree studio focusing on high intensity and low-impact workouts suitable for any fitness level.





The event was very well attended. Our SDA members including their guests enjoyed chauffeured limousine joyrides, an east-meets-west buffet spread and bespoke cocktails from **Moutai Bulao**. All of these thoughtfully put together by BYD in collaboration with the SDA.

The BYD consultants were all hand on deck to provide comprehensive advice and preferential rates on new purchases for our members or for those who were simply looking to trade-in their existing vehicle. That evening had no Test Drives due to alcohol being served but BYD offered all guests the opportunity for a Test Drive at any of their showrooms at their convenience on a separate occasion.





There were also booths mended by the team from FinGroup and H-Kore, engaging our guests throughout the evening. Functional gifts, goodie bags and trial classes by our kind sponsors respectively were given out to all that were in attendance.

To end off the evening, there was a lucky draw whereby some lucky winners walked away with a BYD drive-home experience, leather stationary sets and a bottle of Moutai Bulao. There were compliments all round, a lot of happy faces that night and everyone had a wonderful time. The event was a huge success.

The SDA will also offer to our members courtesy of BYD Harmony Auto an extension of the preferential rates for any new EV purchases into the year 2026. We look forward to bringing to our SDA Members more of such exciting collaborative events in the near future.





**Dr. Boey Sean Kuan**  
("SK")

BDS (Adelaide Australia)

BScD (Hons)  
(Adelaide Australia)

MDS (Periodontology)  
(Singapore)

Council Member  
(2024–2026), Singapore  
Dental Association

Chairperson, NITEC in  
Dental Assisting

Co-Chairperson, Singapore  
Dental Association  
Convention

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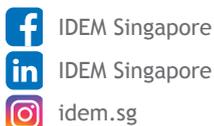
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