



# *A Day in the Year 2050*

By Dr Leong Choon Kit, Editorial Board Member

**“HI DOC,** sorry to disturb your holiday. My mum saw you for her usual check-up two weeks ago. This evening, her pressure shot up to 200/100. What should we do? Mary.” This notification flashed across the visor of my ski helmet.

“Start video conference with Alex and Mary,” I muttered, trying to negotiate a precarious band, as I skied down the famous Remarkables near Queenstown in New Zealand.

“Dear, why don’t you wait till you reach the foot before replying to Mary,” my wife interrupted over my

earpiece. “I’ve just finished cooking supper. Waiting for you. Be safe and don’t get distracted.”

Just then, Alex’s voice came booming out of my earpiece. “Hi Boss, no worries. I have already checked on Mary’s mother’s vital signs. She’s all right.”

I could hear a distant splash through the device. “Where are you, Alex? Thought you were running the night session?”

“Oops, Boss. Swimming with my baby at the country club. Promise to return to the clinic if the need arises.

Anyway, based on all the sensors, Mary’s mum is fine. Her current pressure is 130/80, back to normal.”

“Thanks, Alex. My mum is indeed well, after some rest. Enjoy your swim. And Doc, enjoy your skiing and supper too!” Mary concluded the conversation.

Feeling thankful that Mary’s mother had recovered, my mind returned to those years where we were still talking about Google Glass and Samsung products, or struggling with Project CLEO (GP Clinic Electronic Medical Record

and Operation System) and NEHR (National Electronic Health Record). These ensured that I never had a holiday without being interrupted by friends, patients or staff, no matter which country I was in.

Chat apps like Whatsapp and Line were also popular back then. I recalled the initial excitement of managing to get groups of GPs in various places talking to one another, without incurring extra charges, in real time. Many of us were residing in Singapore, with one in Canberra, another in Perth and John in Geelong. That reminded me: maybe I should get John over tonight for supper. I was sure he could free himself from his patients and teleport himself over for a small gathering. "Get John over for supper tonight," I whispered, as I finished my run.

Deciding to call it a day, I returned to our rented chalet at the alpine resort. Before entering the rustic building, I swept all the snow and mud off my gear. Glancing around the picturesque surroundings that had been so well preserved by the New Zealanders, I noted that it looked exactly like the beautiful scenery depicted in our antique Blu-ray *Lord of the Rings* movie discs.

"Dear, go and take a quick shower and join us at the dining hall for supper," my wife gently commanded. She had not changed a bit from the day we married, always demanding surgical sterility even though she is not medically trained.

"Who is 'us'? Thought we came here to relax and to escape from our grandchildren?"

"Don't you remember? You just invited John over, in between his patients."

"Oh, sure. Didn't know they have such great teleportation machines in Australia. Or didn't know he could get away from his surfing *kakis*, er, I mean, his patients. Ha ha ha. I will return shortly; I certainly cannot

be bathing faster than it takes for him to come from Geelong. At least, technology has not reached that level of sophistication yet."

A short while later, we were all seated around the dining table, enjoying a delicious supper.

"How is life Down Under? We were hoping to migrate those days too. But we didn't manage to, as our kids weren't good enough for medical studies. How we wish we were living like you, surfing, er, I mean, seeing patients." I winked at my wife.

"Probably not as well, in absolute monetary terms. But I can certainly ride the waves more often than you can come here to ski and snowboard." John and I never missed any opportunity to take digs at each other. "Let me show you my clinic figures if you are still sore about not moving and joining me."

So John and I opened our notebooks and projected our clinic management systems (CMS) onto the walls. "Hey guys, why don't you enjoy the meal without talking about business? Your charts flying across the room is unappetising, let alone distracting!" my wife protested.

"Hey, wait a minute. Whose CMS is this? From Perth? Hey, Caleb, are you there?" John exclaimed.

"Hi John! I was just finishing my lecture and scanning my Facepage and Twitterbird. Couldn't help but notice that you guys were talking biz here in Hobbitland. Thought I might as well join in." Caleb walked into the dining hall as he was speaking. He looked exactly like the same guy we met in medical school: the perfect balance of businessman, clinician, teacher and researcher in primary care. An impeccable role model that any Ministry of Health (MOH) would have liked to have.

"I know what you are thinking about. You must be wondering why we did not catch our other *kakis* here as well – Hunk from MOH, Fiona from

the polyclinic, and our researcher Wei. *Aiya*, these guys are so into their jobs. Even with all the technological advancements to free them up, they just cannot learn to harness them wisely. We in the private sector are certainly the early adopters of technologies to live better and more efficiently." Caleb proudly declared.

"Caleb, not true!" Hunk and Fiona protested over the internet screen at the far end of the dining room. "We are representing MOH in Oslo and visiting our primary care colleagues here. Working hard, you know! Not sipping wine or gorging on lamb like you guys are doing."

"Fiona, looks like technology still cannot deliver a handshake or friendship, huh?" my wife chipped in. "Let me teleport some of this delicious wine from Marlborough, courtesy of our junior college classmate Zillion, and piping hot lamb shank to you in Oslo."

"Zillion? She is in Marlborough? I must visit her with Paul one day!" Fiona started to grow excited. "But before that, since you all are enjoying yourselves over there, can I tap your brains into the Millennium Primary Care Masterplan, especially tapping the next generation of IT advancement and..."

*Zap!* I saw my wife wave her hand at the master power switch, and the entire room was immediately plunged into darkness. "With all these advances, you guys will never enjoy a quiet moment from your patients, your business, your students, your faculty..."

"...and our friends in MOH!" The entire room roared with laughter. ■



*Dr Leong Choon Kit is a GP in the private sector. He feels strongly about doctors contributing back to society. As a result, he tries to lend a voice to the silent majority in every issue he has come across, particularly those in healthcare, educational and other social concerns.*