

PAYING IT FORWARD



PROFILE

TEXT BY

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Legend

L to R: Dr Yuan Wei, Dr Foo Gen Lin, Dr Kumaran, Dr Lim Hai Fon, and Dr Gloria Cheng during a team training session at Henderson Wave.

Photo by Dr Foo Gen Lin

SUMMIT OF OUR LIVES CAMPAIGN

THE GROUP:

Young Medical Professionals

THEIR AIM:

To keep the tradition of giving strong in the healthcare fraternity

THEIR DESTINATION:

Everest Base Camp

THEIR GOAL:

To help raise funds for the bursary programme under the SMA Charity Fund (SMACF)

An intention to build relationships among team members, has led to something even more meaningful to impact the future of healthcare. SMACF catches up with Dr Foo Gen Lin, one of the team leads for the Summit of Our Lives Campaign, to find out more about the expedition.

How did the idea of trekking the Everest Base Camp first come about?

We started out intending to organise an expedition to promote volunteerism and camaraderie among our colleagues who have a passion for the outdoors. The Everest Base Camp was chosen because it is a destination that is awe-inspiring and does not require any specific technical training other than a good level of fitness. In addition, we feel that the two-week expedition will help our team members forge stronger bonds with each other and also provide the opportunity to interact with the Nepalese to assess the opportunity for future medical missions. It also helps that one of our members, Dr Kumaran S/O Rasappan, is familiar with Nepal, having summited Mount Everest a few years back.

“ It takes each of us to make a difference for all of us. ”

– Jackie Mutcheson

We were even more convinced about the destination after the unfortunate earthquake in 2015. Dr Kumaran and Dr Wayne Yap, shared with us their experience with Mercy Relief, providing medical aid on the ground level. The country is still recovering from the disaster and we hope to increase awareness that it is safe to return to the country's beautiful trails and mountain ranges.

Why did you choose to give to the SMA Medical Students' Assistance Fund?

Given that one of SMACF's goals is to encourage a tradition of giving back to future generations of medical practitioners, we thought what better way than to start with medical students? By providing bursaries to medical students from disadvantaged families, we hope that this seed of charity will grow as they advance in their careers and continue this cycle of paying it forward for the future of healthcare.

What has your team done to prepare for the strenuous trek to the base camp?

We have been organising monthly training sessions at Bukit Timah, Mount Faber and the Pinnacle@Duxton. This will increase in frequency as we approach the start date of the expedition.

Other than the training sessions, we are also in the midst of sorting out the logistics and travel arrangements. In addition, we have been reaching out to potential supporters and sponsors to raise awareness of and contribute to SMACF. We recently took part in a running event organised by ASICS Singapore and raised \$1,000 for SMACF. Please continue to promote our cause among your friends and colleagues!

Are there any senior medical professionals who have inspired the team by keeping the spirit of giving alive in the medical fraternity?

I am very fortunate to have worked with many of such doctors! I remember fondly my first few medical missions with Dr Joseph Thambiah from National University Hospital who regularly organises medical trips to Batam, Indonesia. Dr Ganesan Naidu, previously the head of department of Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), was also very supportive of our expedition and inspired us with stories from his orthopaedic mission trips to India.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the heads of department of TTSH and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH), Dr Lee Keng Thiam and Dr James Tan, respectively, for continuing to support us in this venture despite the tight manpower situation.

How many members are going on this trip?

So far, nine doctors are confirmed for the trip but we hope to get a few more. Those who are interested to join us can contact me at gen.foo@gmail.com.

Are any of the members recipients of the bursary during medical school?

Yes. One of our members, Dr Moganapriya Gunasegaran, a house officer in the orthopaedic surgery department at KTPH, was a recipient of a bursary in her medical school years. She shared: "The bursary made me realise that dreams don't have to remain as dreams. It made me realise that paying back to the society, as minimal as it seems on the donor's part, can make a lifetime of difference in the recipient's life. I have grown, from the person who received bursaries, to being able to help like-minded younger generations transform their dreams to realities. So, thank you!"

Do you have any words of encouragement for our medical students from underprivileged families?

Pursuing a career in medicine is like running a race. There will be good and bad times, but it is important not to lose track of the goal. Also, remember that we are not alone in this journey and to offer one another help especially when the going gets tough! This means keeping the cycle of giving going strong, not just for the benefit of oneself but also to impact the lives of others! ♦

The expedition team members:

Dr Foo Gen Lin
Dr Kumaran S/O Rasappan
Dr Gayathri Nadarajan
Dr Lim Hai Fon
Dr Eugene Li
Dr Gloria Cheng
Dr Wayne Yap
Dr Jolene Liu
Dr Dawn Cen
Dr Moganapriya Gunasegaran

Support our team of young doctors who are doing their part in building the future of healthcare!

Pledge your support and donate now through the following channels:

1. Donate at https://www.giving.sg/the_summit_of_our_lives
2. Send a cheque payable to "SMA Charity Fund" to: **SMA Charity Fund c/o Singapore Medical Association**, 2 College Road, Level 2, Singapore 169850. Please indicate "The Summit of Our Lives" at the back of the cheque. For tax rebate purposes, please provide us with your name, NRIC number and mailing address.

Please direct all enquiries to jenniferlee@sma.org.sg.