



A TIME TO

Let Loose and Recharge

Text by Dr Tan Weng Jun, Dr Jonathan Tan, A/Prof Kenneth Mak and Dr Charles Wong Sen Chow

You have read about them and the challenges they each rose above in our Feature piece. Here, we find out how these four doctors unwind after a long week of work, and what their greatest gratification from their hard work and sacrifices are.

TWJ

After a long and tiring day of work, I would usually go for a run or do some workouts at home, and then watch thrillers and comedies on Netflix while having ice cream. If I were feeling more energetic, I would play computer or console games. On days that I feel more inspired, I would play the piano or ukulele. I also enjoy exploring new food outlets with my family and friends when I have a free weekend.

After a long day of work, thinking about how I have impacted someone's life positively at work can be most gratifying (best done while having a long hot shower!). The patient with depression who would have ended her life if she had not been admitted and treated, the patient with psychosis who is no longer living in fear of his neighbour, the patient with mania who managed to stop spending all his savings or the patient with dementia whose family is willing to take him home now that he is able to sleep better – these are some incidences that motivate me forward.

And when I'm in need of a craving fix, Ci Yuan Hawker Centre's Mee Hoon Kueh, Green Dot's various vegetarian dishes, R&B Tea's oolong macchiato bubble tea and Chye Seng Huat Hardware's brunch and coffee are some of my go-to options.

JT

Life has changed significantly over the past few years. I used to unwind by buying supper and watching a rugby match or mixed martial arts. However, the years have been kind to me towards the end of my residency and I am now happily married with a son and daughter. Unwinding after a long day's work now is coming home to spend time with my family. Having dinner with them, watching my kids play and watch television together, and helping to bathe them and put them to sleep is more than enough to make the stress of the day melt away.

On the weekends where there are no emergencies in the hospital, I bring my kids out to play, join my in-laws for dinner on Saturdays, and go to church and also swim with my parents on Sundays. Having two young children and being a spine surgeon makes it difficult for me to find time to spend alone with my wife and I really appreciate the rare opportunities where we get to go on dates. I find that the best way to unwind at the end of a week is to spend time with my loved ones. Time is the one commodity that you cannot buy more of and if it is to be spent on anyone, it should be spent on the people you love.

KM

I learnt early on as a hospital doctor to draw pleasure out of small things. It could be a change in the normal routine, allowing myself a few minutes of rest, or a chance encounter with an old friend in the corridors of the hospital. I still use such unexpected opportunities to recharge myself to continue work now. My work routine as a senior consultant in Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and a senior clinical leader in the Ministry of Health is not any less busy now compared to in the past. It's just different with more time spent in meetings discussing health policies and strategies to improve population health, rather than focusing on diagnosing and treating individual patients. My time spent returning to the hospital to see patients in my clinic, with whom I may followed up for years, gives me much more fulfilment now than it did before as I now value greatly the limited opportunities I have to return to my "first love" – direct patient care.

When I do need to chill out and just get away from mulling over anything related to medicine, I read widely and sometime eclectically. It would often be something completely unrelated to medicine, such as the travels of a food journalist searching for the origins of sushi. When I travel overseas, I've made it a habit to explore a foreign city by focusing not on its tourist attractions, but by walking into the suburbs to see how residents engage in their daily routines. It gives me a sense of experiencing something real about that city and gives me a deeper impression of my travels. Sadly, I haven't done the same at home in Singapore, but then again, the grass always seems greener away from where we are, doesn't it?

CW

The most gratifying thing after a long day of work is knowing that our patients are doing well, improving and going home. My family members are very supportive of my work and understand when I sometimes have to drop things at home and rush back to the hospital for emergencies.

After a hard day/week, I look forward to seeing my good wife and children – they, especially our two sons, didn't see much of me during my training years. These days, we would go out for dinners or just visit places together. The most interesting place we've visited was Iceland – to see the Northern Lights. It was a holiday that our son Mark (a colorectal surgeon) and his wife Faye organised and included my wife and me, and it was a trip par excellence!

I now hate long-haul flights and travel overseas only once a year at most, since we have been to many places (and most recently, China).

There are several favourite eating places that my wife Maira and I visit in our free time: Whampoa Hawker Centre; Ng Ah Sio Bak Kut Teh at the Chui Hway Lim Club; Wee Nam Kee Chicken Rice in United Square; and the Silk restaurant at the Singapore Island Country Club. Another thing that I enjoy now are my wines (especially the whites). ♦



Dr Wong and his wife, Maira, during their trip to Taiwan last year.