



A/PROF SIA CHONG HOCK: AN INFLUENCER FOR DECADES

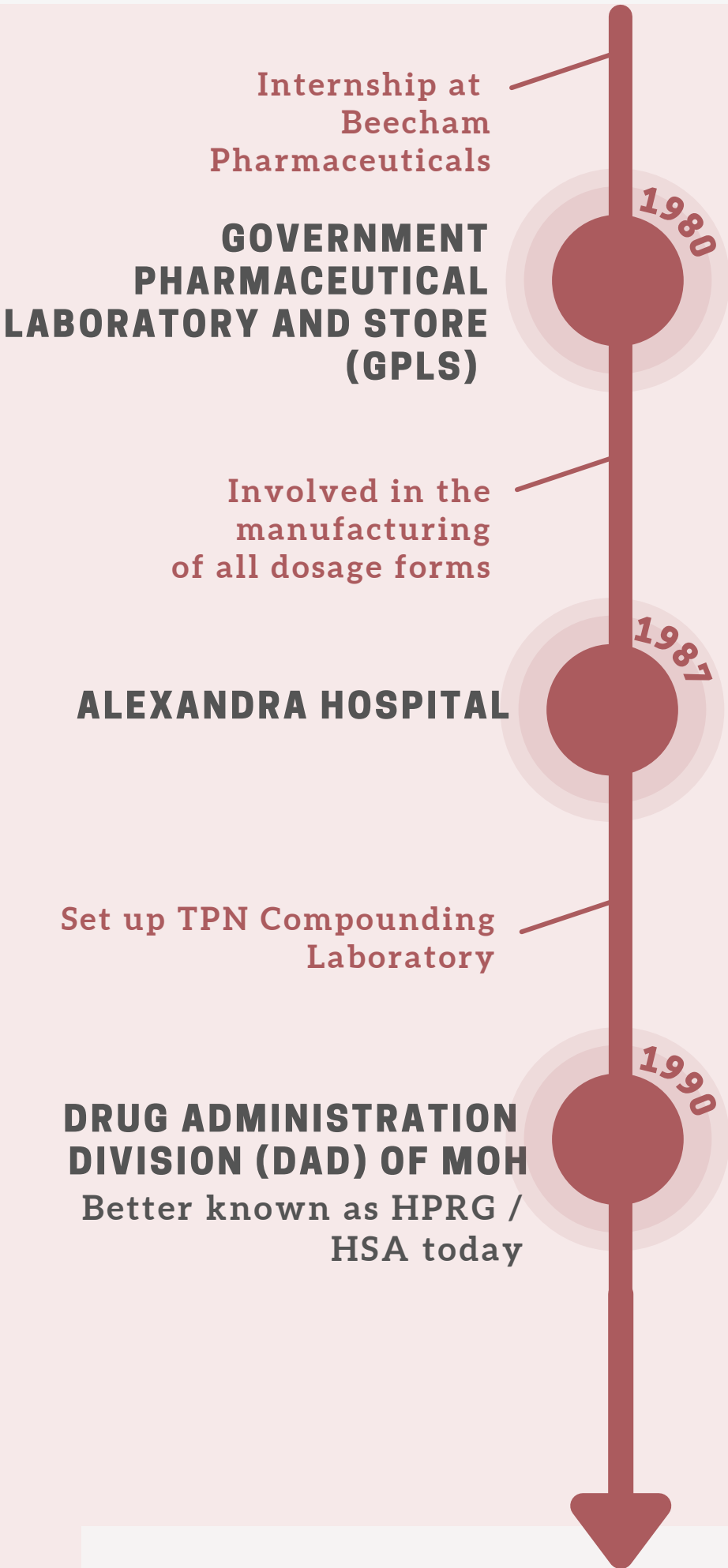
by PSS Industry Chapter

A veteran influencer, Adjunct Associate Professor (A/P) Sia Chong Hock, has been actively influencing both local and regional pharmaceutical scenes. With a career spanning more than 40 years, he rose up the organisation ladder to become the founding Director of the National Pharmaceutical Administration GMP Unit (now known as HSA Audit & Licensing Division), creating significant impact to both the Singapore pharmaceutical manufacturing landscape and to the regional regulatory arena.



The Editorial Team embarked on a ride back in time with A/P Sia, as he shared his experiences, values and work ethos that has facilitated his elevation up the ranks, his accomplishments, and contributions.

ASEAN Joint Sectorial
Committee on GMP
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THE WORDS OF INFLUENCE

A/P Sia's first contact with the industry happened during his internship at Beecham Pharmaceuticals Pte Ltd in Jurong. Despite a keen interest in Pharmacology, the internship instilled in him an inclination towards the industry and the lack of openings in patient care became antecedents for him to join GPLS.



When GPLS closed, A/P Sia was tasked to set up a Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN) Compounding Laboratory in Alexandra Hospital (AH), due to his extensive manufacturing experience garnered from GPLS. Inevitably, the closure was a poignant moment for him. Yet, he quickly discovered his satisfaction with his work at AH, knowing the laboratory has benefitted the patients.

Reflecting on this, A/P Sia left a takeaway:

"The end of a chapter is not the end of a book. Rather, it is the beginning of another new and more exciting chapter in your book of life."

At AH, A/P Sia also interacted with pharmacists from the Drug Administration Division (DAD), who encouraged him to crossover and contribute to the emerging sector of pharmaceutical regulation. Believing that he was able to achieve more, A/P Sia ruminated and eventually joined DAD in 1990.

CREATING AN INFLUENCE IN SINGAPORE AND ABROAD

As A/P Sia described:

"Change is the only constant and there is a need for continuous learning, un-learning and re-learning",

His transition into regulation was accompanied by a phase of self-directed learning. This phase ignited his flame of passion to bring Singapore to the World, the World to Singapore and Pharmacy to greater heights.

CREATING AN INFLUENCE IN SINGAPORE AND ABROAD

BRINGING SINGAPORE TO THE WORLD

A/P Sia's proudest venture was when Singapore acceded to the global Pharmaceutical Inspection Co-operation Scheme (PICS) in January 2000; the first country in Asia to do so. This facilitated the market access of pharmaceutical products and allowed inspectors, like A/P Sia, to collaborate with international counterparts.



BRINGING THE WORLD TO SINGAPORE



A conference that brought professionals from different countries into Singapore, A/P Sia had participated in the International Society of Pharmaceutical Engineering (ISPE) Singapore Conference since 2001. One topic that A/P Sia often shared was on ASEAN's success story on harmonisation of pharmaceutical inspection.

A/P Sia's prodigious commitment to collaborate, adapt, innovate and advance the pharmaceutical regulatory practices in Singapore, ASEAN and beyond culminated in A/P Sia being named as "PSS Industry Pharmacist of the Year" in 2013, and to clinch the prestigious ISPE Singapore Lifetime Award in 2016.

INFLUENCING YOU & ME



With pharmacy students at NUS LT29, 2018

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2000s

Appointed as Adjunct Associate Professor

PSS Industry Pharmacist of the Year, 2013

ISPE Singapore Lifetime Achievement Award, 2016

ISPE Roger Sherwood Article of the Year Award, 2017

Juggling with multiple commitments, A/P Sia opined that some of these appointments were "tall orders and daunting tasks", especially those that he commenced at zero bases and with minimum resources. The tasks to set up Singapore's GMP Inspection Unit and to teach Pharmacy Law, and Compliance and Good Practices in Pharmacy at NUS Department of Pharmacy, were 2 examples.

Initially daunting, the avuncular A/P Sia soon found teaching aspiring pharmacists a tremendously enjoyable task, which was a welcoming break from the daily grind of inspection and regulation at HSA. Beyond the walls of the lecture halls, A/P Sia collaborates with faculty to co-supervise final year undergraduates in their final year projects, contributing articles to international journals to benefit the industry and regulators. A/P Sia described his undergraduate teaching assignment as a win-win partnership, where he also learns from these young, ebullient students. Talking about his leaps of faith when he accepted the tall orders, and his perspective on lifelong learning, he shared:

"Too much of a comfort zone can be a trap. We must get used to feeling discomfort and vulnerable from time to time and have a hunger for knowledge. We have to embrace life-long learning!"

A/P Sia shares with us his pillars of motivation and words of advice

INFLUENCED BY HIS 3 PILLARS OF MOTIVATION

As indefatigable as A/P Sia appears, he has also encountered career fatigue in this Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world. When asked about his approach to cope with career fatigue, and how he resiliently contributed to the pharmaceutical industry in this fast-paced world, A/P Sia identified his three pillars of motivation that supported his career:



FAMILY

A/P Sia believes that work-life balance is crucial and family support is of utmost importance. He received **unstinting support from his spouse** – A/P Chan Lai Wah (NUS Department of Pharmacy) – as he navigated and repeatedly accepted challenges in his work-life journey.

CREATING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

His belief in creating something from scratch, shaping and **seeing his initiative bear fruits** helped him stay motivated to contribute. This was clearly evinced in his involvement in driving the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on GMP Inspection.

HOBBIES

Outside work, he is an avid racket sports player, a self-taught guitarist, and an amateur horticulturist in his own garden. These hobbies **helped him to recharge**, allowing him to bounce back strongly from the moments of fatigue.

Scintillatingly, A/P Sia’s belief in his ability to create something out of nothing was also seen in his long-term goals, where he hopes to compile all the regulatory articles, which he authored, also as part of his hobbies, into a book.

THE MEANING OF AN INFLUENCER

Although A/P Sia started his journey into Pharmaceutical Regulations without much guidance and knowledge, he was fortunate to have met a few mentors along the way. A/P Sia had collaborated with Mr. Robert “Bob” Tribe – the then-Chairman of PICS and Chief GMP Auditor of Australia Therapeutic Goods Administration – when Singapore’s acceded to PICS. What initially started as an auditor-auditee relationship unexpectedly transited into a mentor-mentee partnership. This mentorship impressed A/P Sia deeply and had influenced his approach to acquiring technical and interpersonal skills.



ISPE Singapore Lifetime Achievement Award 2016

“If there are people who are sincere in guiding us, it is a blessing. Bob was someone who was sincere and generous to guide me and to help Singapore. It is rare to come across someone like him.”

Mr. Robert “Bob” Tribe

Using the experience gained from his octogenarian mentor, A/P Sia also shared three key ideas about mentorship, and the importance of having mentor(s) in our career:

- 1A MENTOR CAN HELP YOU AVOID PITFALLS ALONG THE WAY
- 2A MENTOR CAN GUIDE YOU IN A STRATEGIC WAY TO SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE, AND TO LEARN THE ROPES FASTER.
- 3IT IS WISE TO SEEK OUT MENTOR(S) WHO ARE SINCERE AND WHO ARE WILLING TO INVEST THEIR TIME IN YOU.

AFTERWORDS

Since receiving his first paycheck from GPLS several decades ago, A/P Sia is still authoring exciting chapters in his book of life; he has continued to learn, un-learn and re-learn, to stay current in this ever-changing world. His influence, as a pharmacist well-versed in pharmaceutical regulation, science and technology, continued to be evident through his incessant efforts to educate new generations of pharmacists and regulators in Singapore and abroad.

A fervent lifelong learner, with constant support from his family and motivated by his beliefs to be able to create something out of nothing (although he is no magician), A/P Sia has this piece of advice for the newer generation of pharmacists:

“Be prepared for a journey of lifelong learning. Think of yourself as a computer software which will undergo version changes from time to time. Never think of yourself as a finished product just because you are a graduate. Because if you have that mindset, you will be finished, sooner rather than later!”



ft. the Editorial Team who embarked on a time travel with A/P Sia

KEY TAKEAWAYS

THE END OF A CHAPTER IS NOT THE END OF A BOOK, BUT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CHAPTER IN YOUR BOOK OF LIFE.

RELY ON YOUR PILLARS OF SUPPORT AND MOTIVATION TO GET US THROUGH TOUGH TIMES

BE PREPARED FOR A JOURNEY OF LIFE LONG LEARNING

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING MENTOR(S) IN OUR CAREER

- ➔ A mentor can help you avoid pitfalls along the way
- ➔ A mentor can guide you in a strategic way to see the bigger picture, and to learn the ropes faster.
- ➔ It is wise to seek out mentor(s) who are sincere and who have the time for you.

Thank you A/P Sia, for your words of wisdom; for your humility to serve and for inspiring us with your passion to learn.