



MS CHRISTINA LIM SEOW LING: IN PURSUIT OF PASSION AND PURPOSE

by PSS Industry Chapter

Entrepreneur, Pioneer, Mentor. As the Founder of Ocean Health and TDF (Therapeutic Dermatologic Formula), Ms Christina Lim's reputation as a pioneer of supplements precedes her. Her impact to the local healthcare landscape has been significant - providing patients with easily-accessible, affordable and quality supplements to improve their chronic health conditions; as well as introducing chemical peels to Singapore to benefit patients suffering from acne and acne scars, pigmentation and aging skin. A strong believer in contributing back to society, she currently serves as mentor to both companies and individuals, and is a strong supporter of PSS and NUS Department of Pharmacy. Christina was the PSS Industry Pharmacist of the Year 2008.



Christina with mom, the late Wee Swan Neo, who was her primary inspiration for setting up Ocean Health

THE BEGINNINGS

Christina graduated in 1982. She joined Guardian Pharmacy as a pupil pharmacist after being extremely inspired by Mrs Pauline Ong, the then General Manager of Guardian. During a career talk, Christina was inspired about what difference pharmacists can potentially make at retail pharmacy in primary health support. This being her first job out of university, she worked very hard, gave her 100% to tasks that were assigned to her. Due to this drive and strong work ethos, she landed on a project to help set up the first central warehouse for Guardian Pharmacy. This project aroused an interest in marketing as she had to create weekly promotional activities for her suppliers' sales and marketing managers.

IN PURSUIT OF PASSION AND GROWTH

This interest in marketing motivated her to move on to a new position as a marketing executive in Diethelm, now known as DKSH. This proved to be an opportunity for substantial growth and development as she had to supervise 15 sales representatives and oversee 13 pharmaceutical principals, many of whom were older than her father. She gained many valuable experiences, of which brought her endless opportunities of growth, getting headhunted and ultimately becoming a young general manager of a pharmaceutical distributor.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - DO WHAT YOU LOVE, LOVE WHAT YOU DO

"While having lunch at Marine Parade Hawker Centre, I saw this old uncle cleaning the table and hobbling from one table to another. It dawned on me that if I could make glucosamine sulphate affordable, elderly like him can be more mobile for a longer time, have a higher quality of life while continuing to earn a living."

raison d'être on setting up Ocean Health



Ocean Health Team in the early days

Back then, treatment of osteoarthritis was limited. The mainstay was NSAIDs which only provide symptomatic relief and do not alter disease progression. Having observed the efficacy of glucosamine in improving her mother's osteoarthritis, Christina became a strong advocate in the use of supplement to improve chronic illness. However, the role of supplements such as glucosamine in the role of disease was not widely established; with also much ambiguity in its regulations. The use of glucosamine was also in its infancy, and the cost then would price out much of the population. Believing that glucosamine would be of tremendous value to a large group of osteoarthritic patients, Ocean Health was setup in 1994 to be an avenue of readily-affordable high quality GMP-grade glucosamine.

"My main purpose [in setting up Ocean Health] was to help patients. We didn't really make a lot of money [from glucosamine] because I was obsessed in providing the highest quality [of glucosamine to ensure efficacy]."

raison d'être on setting up Ocean Health

RESILIENCE - WHEN THE NIGHT IS THE DARKEST

Convinced in the role of supplements in alleviating other conditions, Ocean Health expanded its portfolio to offer a wide portfolio including multivitamins, ginkgo biloba and omega-3. Ocean Health moved from strength to strength until SARS happened in 2003.

"My heart goes out to all businesses suffering due to circumstances brought about by COVID-19. I went through SARS in 2003. People stayed away from hospitals, clinics and pharmacies. It was very difficult for the business because the expenses continued to come in but sales were frozen."

On unexpected challenges

2003 was the toughest year for Ocean Health as it went through 2 crisis. SARS brought about the first, causing the retail sales to be put on hold for many months. The second was due to multiple product recalls by a contract manufacturer, resulting in significant losses due to returned goods by both retailers and consumers. The business went into cash flow problem, almost going into bankruptcy. She had to sell off many of her possessions and mortgage the house she purchased for her mother.

However, she did not give up. Passion drove her to clear obstacles in her path as she sacrificed whatever was necessary to revive the company. Along with the love and support received from her family, customers and employees, Ocean Health pushed through to what it is today. Ocean Health was subsequently acquired by Hyphens Pharma in 2020. Today, Christina keeps herself busy by mentoring startups and individuals, and organizing cooking classes with proceeds going to charity.

"Success doesn't last forever. Build and nurture your success but stay humble. When you're arrogant, people will stop helping you. To succeed, you need team work. Humility carries you a long way in team work. Every single part of an engine is essential to get the engine moving. Don't forget to acknowledge team members for their contribution. During my 2003 encounter, my employees supported, believed and assured me. They even waited till I could pay them their bonus late. Every little support counts."

On Love, Humility and Leadership



2014 Influential Brands Awards, one of multiple earned awards



with Minister Vivian Balakrishnan at the 2010 Standard Chartered Marathon. Ocean Health was one of its sponsor.



with other speakers at a medical aesthetic conference in Malaysia

CHRISTINA'S GOLDEN PEARLS

1

Passion

Seek your passion in your work. You can develop the passion in your job, if you can't, find a new job. Don't work because of money. You need the energy to sustain you for the long haul. Passion gives you that energy to complete your marathon.

2

Love, Humility and Gratitude

Everything you do, do with love. When you succeed, be humble. Pride comes before a fall. When you feel that you know and/or have everything, that's when you need to be at your humblest.

3

Integrity

Never sacrifice your integrity for short term success. Honour your words even if it hurts you as your integrity will pay off some day. When people trust you, they will be willing to help and support you - and all these small actions of support goes a long way.

4

Choose to be Happy

Happiness is a choice we have to constantly and consciously make everyday. Do not make money or achievements a measurement of your success. For Christina, she chose to measure her success by the number of lives she touched positively.