

SHINING STAR: MR COLIN TANG WEI QIANG

by PSS Community Chapter

Shining Star is a PSS initiative that features individuals who embody the exceptional qualities of a community pharmacist. In this issue we shine the spotlight on Mr. Tang Wei Qiang from Watsons Pharmacy.



Hi, my name is Colin and I am a Principal Clinical Pharmacist working with Watsons as a community pharmacist for 7 years. I am the team leader of the Media portfolio in Watsons, and I have plenty of experience in leading informative public health presentations in local media, public roadshows and on Facebook Live.

I am also an active member of the Watsons Intermediate and Long-term Care portfolio, providing medication review and patient care services for an ageing population. Finally, I am involved in the training and mentorship of NUS Pharmacy undergraduates and pre-registration pharmacists.

What is the most memorable moment in your pharmacy career?

There are certainly many memorable moments in my career with the wide demographic of customers that come to the store. One particularly memorable case happened when I am working in Watsons Jewel Changi Airport.

There was a Russian lady who could not speak any English and she was a little frantic when she approached the pharmacy. I had to use Google translate on my phone to communicate with her. Turns out that she had left her high blood pressure medications at the hotel, while her flight was departing in 3 hours and she wished to purchase some for the trip back. Unfortunately, my outlet did not have sufficient stock at that time, and I had to rush to the transit store outlet in another terminal 20 minutes away to obtain the medication. She was very grateful for the help and certainly left with a good impression of Singapore and community pharmacists.

"Community pharmacists need to have great adaptability to change, given that new medications supplements and products are introduced to the market all the time and customers' wants and needs can change on a whim. We also need to be aware of the changes to clinical guidelines so that appropriate advice can be given when our customers ask us."

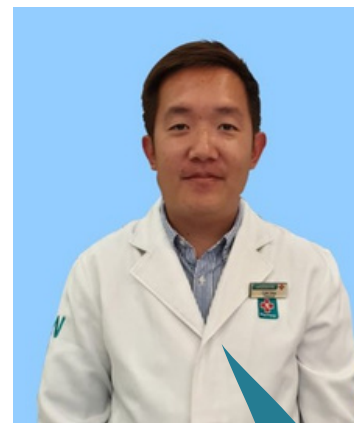
**What helps/motivates you to stay in your practice?
How do you harmonize work and family?**

The things that motivated me to stay in this practice include listening to the stories that customers shared with me and witnessing how my advice has helped them better their health. Even small tips like washing the bedsheets frequently to prevent allergic rhinitis goes a long way in managing their condition and quality of life.

Being involved in student training also spurs me on to pass on the skills and knowledge to the next generation of pharmacists. These skills can be applied in many situations, even if the students do not go on to practice in community pharmacy.

Harmonising work and family can be challenging with the demands of such a fast-paced role that I am in, but one thing that helped is ensuring work life separation by channelling all work communication through a particular app (in my case it is Microsoft Teams), and making it clear to my team members that my obligations need only be fulfilled during work hours. Anything urgent will be communicated through another app and the use of this app will be minimised as much as possible.

I also remind myself that it is ok to take breaks as once I am fully rested and recharged, I will then be better able to serve the customers! Travelling is a great way for one to broaden the mind and gain perspectives to help with both work and personal relationships.



" If you are able to practice both independently and collaborate on projects, this role of community pharmacist can help you grow with the dynamic and fast paced environment. Passion for helping to better the health of our customers is also essential. It is important to wind down on the days you are not working, allowing you to take care of family or pursue other passions! "

What is one misconception about community pharmacists that you hope to correct?

The one common misconception is that a community pharmacist's presence is only at the dispensary or the store. With the push for using technology to help us drive health messaging to the public, it has provided so many channels for our presence to be felt.

From YouTube to Instagram to TikTok, we can harness the reach of these channels to educate a wider audience, sharing simple health tips for the trending health topic. More people can then benefit from the knowledge gained to take better care of themselves.

Apart from providing medication and healthcare services from the dispensary, we are also reaching out to help the "silver generation", by providing medication reconciliation and management services in intermediate and long-term care facilities. These initiatives can tap on our expertise in medications, to ensure the continuity of care is maintained for their chronic conditions.

" Community pharmacists also need to have compassion and be inquisitive when talking to customers. In order to make the most appropriate recommendations, we need to know about their health background and how the ailment is affecting them. We also need to show empathy to the customer so that in turn they will trust us."