

My Research Journey



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I started as a Research Officer in the Biomedical Research Centre at the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar), where I participated in virological disease research projects together with clinicians and co-authored a few publications in the local medical journals.

After finishing my Master of Public Health, I had the opportunity to join the Health Services and Outcomes Research (HSOR) unit at the National Healthcare Group. This began

my transition from biomedical research to public health research.

While working at HSOR, I gained new knowledge from conferences and trainings, and developed myself through participating in research projects. Through my work at HSOR, I have also witnessed how research plays a critical role in improving patient care, and the translation into practice.

Mentoring

In my pursuit of a career as a researcher, I believe that good mentoring and guidance are critical. Having supportive and inspiring mentors in my unit have given me a chance to be involved in the health services research projects and programme evaluations, research grant applications and scientific paper publications.

Research Projects

Among the projects I am currently involved in, I am working with Dover Park Hospice to evaluate the effectiveness of a new model of home hospice care in comparison to an existing model. The intervention group consisted of patients in the Dover Park Home Hospice Care Programme while the comparison group consisted of patients from Assisi Hospice, Agape Methodist Hospice, HCA Hospice Care,

Metta Hospice Care and Singapore Cancer Society.

Health services utilisation such as the number of emergency department visits, number of hospitalisations, hospital length of stay, number of specialist outpatient clinic visits in the last year of life were compared. A telephone survey was also conducted one to three months after patient's demise with their family to assess the satisfaction of the families on the new programme.

Another interesting project is deriving a scoring system for the Emergency Department (ED) of Tan Tock Seng Hospital in making clinical decisions for Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU)/High Dependency Unit (HDU) transfers. A retrospective observational cohort study design was used. Information on demographics, pre-admission functional status, co-morbid conditions, clinical and laboratory parameters on arrival at ED and treatment initiated at ED were collected through case notes review.

I value ongoing learning and growth in the field, and I look forward to working on new and exciting research projects which would make a significant contribution to public health care. Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Director, Dr Heng Bee Hoon and the team for their kind and ongoing support throughout my journey.

My Interest in Health Services Research



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I chose the specialty of Public Health because unlike clinical medicine, the focus of public health is on populations and the emphasis is on disease prevention and health

promotion for the whole community. As part of my requirements in the Advanced Specialty Training (AST), I chose to do health services research as part of my training.

My interest in Health Services Research started during my two years part-time Master of Public Health (MPH) course in National University of Singapore where I did a module on Introduction to Health Services Research.

During the module, I was exposed to researchers from diverse fields but the unifying feature is that they are all doing Health Services Research. As part of my MPH, I completed a practicum on the rate of progression of subjects with impaired fasting glycaemia to Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus using the NHG Diabetes Registry. This study has been accepted for publication by Journal of Diabetes and an oral presentation based on the study at the 45th Annual Singapore Malaysia Congress of Medicine 2011 has won merit award.

Subsequently, I applied for the NHG-KTPH Clinician Leadership in Research (CLR)

Programme, an NHG research manpower development scheme, to find out what the predictors of rapid progression in patients with chronic kidney disease were. The results have been presented in the Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress 2012 and published in the Dec 2013 issue of Annals Academy of Medicine Singapore. I highlighted that the number of Chronic Kidney Disease patients in National Healthcare Group Polyclinics has increased significantly from 2007 to 2011 at an average annual rate of 21.3%. Majority of patients in the study conducted in 2011 were in stage 3A and stage 3B which were considered early as there are five stages of Chronic Kidney Disease.

Looking back on my decision to do research instead of practising as a full-time clinician, I realised that research is about seeking the 'truth' and it may not suit everybody but for those who seek knowledge instead of fame and fortune, it is a career that is fulfilling and allows one to explore one's interest day in and day out.