

# ENGAGE

Quarterly newsletter by the Singapore Physiotherapy Association (SPA)

## About Us



Founded in 1964, the Singapore Physiotherapy Association (SPA) is the only association that represents physiotherapy in Singapore. We are registered under the Registry of Societies Singapore, and a member of World Physiotherapy.

### Our Vision:

To be united as one voice and to advocate for high standard of physiotherapy in Singapore.

### Our Mission:

Encouraging high standards of physiotherapy practice education and research.

Promoting safe, effective, and proven clinical standards and practice.

Supporting and uniting physiotherapists in Singapore and beyond.

## Notice

The SPA Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held online on 25th May 2022 from 6.30pm to 9pm. Please note that we will be calling for nominations for the next SPA Council and there will be voting during this AGM. Members can submit their nominations for the next council by 11th May 2022.



In line with the Prescribed Alternative Arrangements under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Alternative Arrangements for Meetings for Registered Societies) Order 2020 (the "Alternative Arrangement Order").

# Physiotherapy and COVID-19

The government's decision to transit the COVID-19 pandemic into endemicity means that we will have to adapt to new norms and live with the virus. This will also allow easing of restrictions, as well as a more streamlined work process in managing the virus. The physiotherapy profession must also adapt to cope with the ever-changing needs of the healthcare system and our patients.

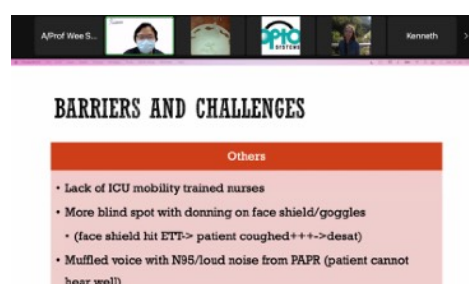
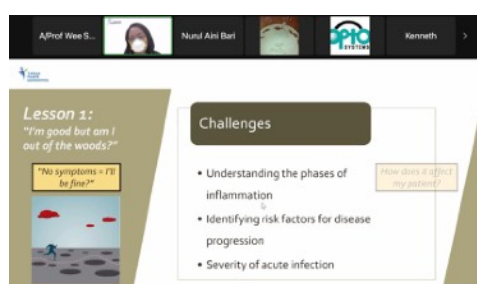
On 18th January 2022, the SPA Education Committee organised a webinar about 'COVID-19: Rehabilitation Perspective and Challenges'. The webinar, comprised of two symposiums with speakers from various institutions saw more than 100 registrants.

## Symposium 1: What lies ahead for rehabilitation?

Speakers: Dr Monica Chan (NCID), Dr Tham Shuen Loong (TTSH), Ms Audrey Lee (TTSH)  
Moderator: Mr John Tan (SGH)

## Symposium 2: Rehabilitation for persons with COVID-19: Challenges Moving into the Endemic

Speakers: Ms Nurul Aini (SGH), Ms Lenis Phoa (YCH), Ms Jasmine Gui (NTUC Health)  
Moderator: A/Prof Wee Seng Kwee (TTSH)



## SPA COVID-19 Guidelines

In addition, SPA is in the final stages of producing our own COVID-19 Guidelines on safety and quality of physiotherapy services delivered for patients diagnosed with COVID-19, particularly as we move into the endemic phase. Stay tuned for updates

# A Greener Path With Environmental Physiotherapy

The following article is written by SIT Sustainability Workgroup published in its internal monthly newsletter (*We Do Our Part - Sustainability in SIT*) in January 2022; reproduced with permission.

Dr Lester E Jones, Senior Lecturer (Physiotherapy), SIT Health and Social Sciences Cluster, recently presented Physiotherapy and the Earth's Global Climate: A Need for Cultural Change at Singapore Physiotherapy Association (SPA) Education Webinar on 11 November 2021. We spoke to Dr Lester on the importance of environmental physiotherapy and how SIT physiotherapy students can do their part to protect our environment.

## What is Environmental Physiotherapy?

Environmental physiotherapy can be seen as an emerging field of physiotherapy. It is a way of thinking and working that advances both human and our planet's health. It promotes the exploration of the profession's impact – both positive and negative – from an ecological perspective, and recognising that human health relies on a healthy environment.



## When did you start thinking about the importance of and correlation between our environment and physiotherapy?

Ever since I can remember, I have had a strong sense of preserving natural environments against harmful human activities. It is one of my core principles and I view many aspects of my life through that lens. It was 2009 when I was first asked to write an editorial for a physiotherapy journal, Physiotherapy and the Earth's global climate: a need for cultural change, that I really focused on what the profession might do to reduce its negative impact – especially with regard to carbon emissions. It was apparent to me that the profession, which uses relatively little technology, had the potential to review ways of doing things to minimise waste and even strive for a zero-emissions target.

## **How do you promote a culture of environmental physiotherapy as a practitioner and educator?**

To date, I have been able to contribute to a number of publications including the Environmental Physiotherapy Association blog page [here](#), in which I wrote a [personal reflection on World Environment Day 2020](#). I also have presented both my concerns and ideas for action to Singapore Physiotherapy Association members and Australian Physiotherapy Association members. SIT recently became one of the participating organisations for an initiative to improve education about planetary health in physiotherapy training. As part of this, I meet with other physiotherapy educators from around the world to discuss and share innovations and resources.

“It was apparent to me that the (physiotherapy) profession, which uses relatively little technology, had the potential to review ways of doing things to minimise waste and even strive for a zero emissions target.



**- Dr Lester E Jones, Senior Lecturer (Physiotherapy)  
SIT Health and Social Sciences Cluster**

## **What are the environmental physiotherapy policies and practices of physiotherapists today?**

Globally, the UN sustainable development goals are informing many professions and educational programmes. It is important that these are integrated into physiotherapy training and we are increasingly mindful of this at SIT. I think policy, and guidelines are developing. I anticipate we will see more organisational support for sustainable healthcare in the coming years. An important aspect of this is the investment in related research areas.

## **What are the opportunities and challenges to support making physiotherapy greener and more sustainable?**

The EPT Agenda23 initiative is a great opportunity to build a global community of practice and to establish a rich set of teaching resources. Beyond physiotherapy training, I think the leaders in our profession need to proactively adopt and promote work practices that reduce waste and increase the care and connection of green (forest) and blue (waterways) spaces for physical activity. One way to facilitate that is for professional groups to give voice to those passionate about this cause, by supporting a special interest group or network.



One of our pillars of clinical decision-making should involve weighing up the environmental impact of our recommendations. For example, in my opinion, elastic exercise bands are overprescribed by physiotherapists with little thought to how they are disposed of after their limited lifespan. This also extends to the purchasing and use of other equipment too. Micro plastic pollution is everywhere. It is the same for reusable water bottles that are coated in decorative pattern that eventually disintegrates and flakes off. We can advise patients to avoid equipment that is coated in plastics for no functional reason. These clinical and purchasing decisions are possible. We just need to stay motivated and supported to change well-established ways of doing things.

## **Any tips to physiotherapy patients on how they can also do their part for the environment?**

When patients are receiving physiotherapy advice and treatment, they could ask about recycling programmes for used equipment or waste, seek out exercise and activity strategies that utilise spaces in the natural environment –and report back successes. This will boost the confidence in the physiotherapist community to recommend the same to other patients.

## References:

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## Charting Your Career Progression

As the physiotherapy profession in Singapore continues to grow, physiotherapists would have the opportunity to take up roles beyond the clinical settings, venturing into clinical education, academia, research and management. To help our members navigate this journey, SPA Education Committee invited 4 passionate physiotherapists who have been in the field for close to 20 years and more for a live sharing moderated by Ms Audrey Kwan. Here are some takeaway messages from our speakers!



Dr Shamala Thilarajah

"Make the most out of every opportunity you get. People will see how you work and recommend you, and that's how you get the chance to do new things. Be prepared and consistent with every opportunity!"



Ms Yong Limin

"Clinical competency is critical for management decision making in clinical services development. Enjoy the process of learning new things and becoming better."



Dr Pua Yong Hao

"I define career success as having a job that (i) pays reasonably well and (ii) gives you the freedom to do things that truly matter."

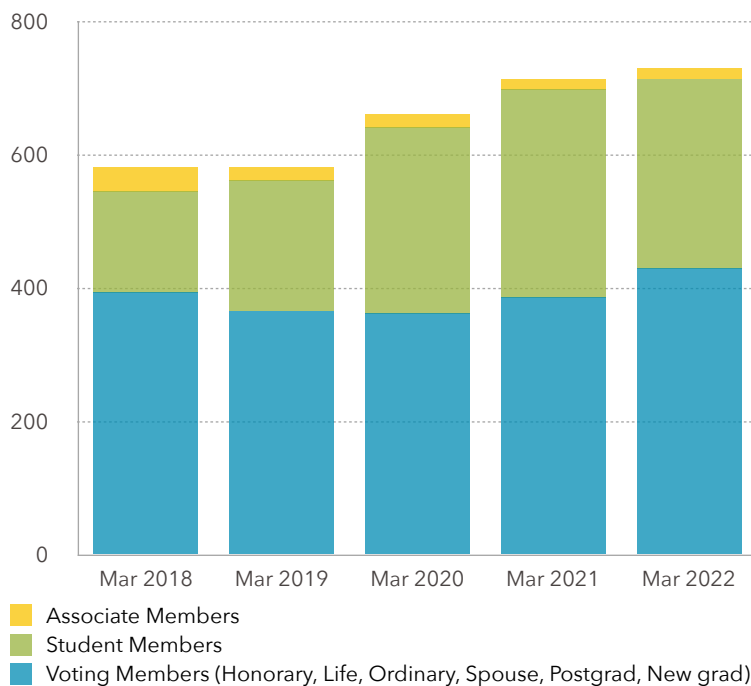


A/Prof Kwah Li Khim

"I think burnout comes about from doing too much of what does not matter to you. Try to find the balance between doing things that matter and things that do not."

# SPA Membership

SPA Council would like to thank you for supporting our association. Let's continue to grow and work together!



## Wild Apricot Mobile Application

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<https://tinyurl.com/joinsgphysio>

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