

Citation on Dr Boey Hong Khim 2009 FY Khoo Memorial Lecturer

I must first thank the Singapore Radiological Society (SRS) for giving me the privilege and honour of presenting this citation on the 2009 FY Khoo Memorial Lecturer, Dr Boey Hong Khim. I must also thank Dr Anthony Goh for kindly agreeing to read this citation for me as I am unfortunately unable to be present.

Dr Boey Hong Khim graduated MB BS, University of Singapore in 1961. He did his specialist training from 1964-1966 in the Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, under Prof Robert Steiner, who became a close personal friend. Prof Steiner was subsequently elected President of both the British Institute of Radiology and the Royal College of Radiologists. Dr Boey completed his specialist training in 1966, was admitted Fellow of the Academy of Medicine in 1970 and elected Fellow of the Royal College of Radiologists in 1980.

The first 18 years of his radiological career was spent in the Ministry of Health, most of it in the Singapore General Hospital (SGH). He was made Consultant in 1961 and Senior Consultant in 1968, the year he left for Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) to head its Radiology Department, as well as taking over as Administrative Head of the Radiology Departments at Toa Payoh, Kandang Kerbau and Changi Hospitals.

He was therefore right in the thick of the seismic changes – in economics, healthcare, education and virtually everything else – that followed the political upheavals of the late '50s and '60s when Singapore became independent. He was also in the thick of the many revolutionary technological advances emerging at that time that radically transformed the practice of radiology and made it possible to be the pillar of modern clinical medicine it is today.

Change is by its very nature challenging. When change is radical and comes one after another, it goes beyond being merely challenging. More often than not it humbles and chastens. But it also brings out one's best. This was something radiologists in that early period of our history went through. Dr Boey is fortunate in being manually dextrous. Even as a houseman he so impressed the Head of Paediatrics, Dr Quah Kwee Guan, that in her report to the Public Service Commission she specifically wrote, "He is good with his hands." In radiology, as we know, this counts.

Lymphangiography was the first procedure where Dr Boey's manual dexterity showed through. He pioneered it locally from 1967-1973. His striking success with the technique led Professor (later Sir) Gordon Arthur Ransome to invite him to do an MD thesis on the subject. Dr Boey also pioneered locally the technique of double-contrast barium study of the upper and lower gastrointestinal tracts (GITs) with endoscopic correlation. Prof Shirekabe of the National Cancer and Juntundo Hospitals, Tokyo, who trained him in the contrast technique as well as in correlative endoscopy,

thought so highly of the level of expertise he achieved that he designated Dr Boey his "ambassador" to teach the techniques outside of Japan!

SGH's first Cardiovascular Laboratory was opened in the early '70s with the help of Dr Aubrey Pitt of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Melbourne. It was in the Department of Radiology and Dr Boey was the radiologist in charge of running it. He was among the first to perform percutaneous transfemoral catheterisation in this country, and excelled in superselective angiography. He did the first embolisation for massive GIT bleeding in 1976, and later for hepatoma.

Using the newly invented thin Chiba needle from Japan, he started thin needle lung biopsy the same year. In 1978 he with Dr Siva did the first obstetric ultrasound in Singapore at Toa Payoh Hospital, using a donated ultrasound machine. And he was among the earliest to do CT scanning when TTSH acquired a Head Scanner for neurologic studies.

This long litany of "firsts" and "among the earliest" establishes Dr Boey as a true pioneer in the modernisation of radiology in this country.

Few of us are given the opportunity to plan a radiology department. Dr Boey was involved in the planning of 5; 2 were major radiology departments for Singapore's largest hospitals – the new SGH, and the new University Hospital at Kent Ridge. The others were smaller ones for Alexandra Hospitals and the Neurological Institute of TTSH.

1982 was a landmark year for Dr Boey. He was appointed Visiting Fellow (Professorial Status) at the Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, London. The same year he left the Ministry of Health to enter private practice and founded MediRad Associates Pte Ltd, a private practice radiology group of which he was the Founding Director. MediRad Associates eventually grew to be the largest and most successful private radiological group in Southeast Asia and is listed in the Stock Exchange.

In 1986 in a remarkable show of entrepreneurship, Dr Boey set up the very first regional MRI unit in private practice. It was an extremely bold move at the time, considering MRI was still a relatively novel technology and its cost literally stratospheric. But his judgment was vindicated and MediRad Associates shot into prominence as the first training centre for MRI in the region. Doctors came from as far as India to learn. For this feat of enterprise, the Economic Development Board named him Singapore's "first medical entrepreneur". It was a distinction well deserved. MediRad Associates Pte Ltd tied up with Mount Elizabeth Hospital in 1986 and Dr Boey became Clinical Director of the Hospital's Department of Radiology.

In an unusual arrangement in 1991, he was seconded back to Government service by the Ministry of Health while at the same time still holding his post as Clinical Director of Radiology in Mt Elizabeth Hospital. It testified to the high regard in which he

was held. Dr Boey took over the Administrative Headship of the Departments of Radiology and Neuroradiology at TTSH up to his retirement in 1996. He was reappointed Senior Consultant Radiologist and currently serves in that capacity at the SGH.

Throughout his career Dr Boey has shown a strong interest in education and research. His sub-specialties include neuro, cardiovascular, gastroenterology and interventional radiology, and CT and magnetic resonance scanning, and he has published and lectured extensively on them.

His early research work centred on lymphoma, diabetic legs, cancers of the GIT and dysbaric necrosis, which was undertaken in collaboration with Jake Davidson of Glasgow and Colonel Howe of the Singapore naval units. His other researches are in the fields of neuroradiology, interventional radiology, MRI and from 2005 CT coronary angiography.

He had for years been involved in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching at the University of Singapore Medical School. From 1993-1996 he was appointed Board Member and Examiner (Medical Radiology) Master of Medicine degree after the University offered the degree. It would seem odd for a radiologist to be appointed Clinical Instructor in Endoscopy for the Master of Surgery degree course, but Dr Boey was – on the strength of his extended training in endoscopy. As a matter of interest, Dr Boey also acted as External Examiner (Viva Voce) in Diagnostic Radiography for the College of Radiographers, UK for 10 years until he left for private practice in 1982.

The tremendous efforts to expand and modernise radiology in the '60s and '70s quickly fostered an urge to enhance international recognition of the progress made. This was again an area in which Dr Boey contributed a great deal. He was (and is) an avid attendee of international conferences, courses and seminars and over the years made numerous academic visits to major centres in the US, UK, Australia and France. With his natural interpersonal skills, he made firm friends all over. Although the setting was different, Prof Steiner becoming a close personal friend of his, as mentioned earlier, is one example. I have no doubt having such a friend of Singapore Radiology could only have helped when the Royal College of Radiologists debated on Singapore's merits as an overseas venue for staging its membership examination in the '70s.

His interest and involvement in regional professional bodies, riding on the back of good interpersonal relationships, also bore fruit. As a result of his efforts and those of other fellow colleagues in the Asian Oceanian Society of Radiology, Singapore was selected to host the 3rd Asian Oceanian Congress of Radiology in 1979. Dr Boey chaired the Organising Committee. It was Singapore's first major scientific congress in radiology, and its great success spoke eloquently of the high academic standard of Singapore radiology and of its organisational efficiency.

Dr Boey's overseas connections helped in yet another accomplishment after he was Seconded by the Ministry of

Health to head Radiology at TTSH in 1991. This was the establishment the following year of academic "link up" with 4 major centres: the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, University of Utah, Stanford University and the Institute of Neurology in Phoenix, Arizona.

He was also responsible for establishing 2 sets of Memorandum of Understanding in Radiology: the first between the Academy of Medicine, Singapore and two Royal Colleges – the Royal College of Radiologists, UK and the Royal Australian College of Radiologists (both in 1992); and the second in 1993 between the National University of Singapore and TTSH on the one hand and the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania on the other.

Dr Boey has chaired, organised, served as panelist and lectured extensively in conferences, courses, workshops and seminars on topics within his special interests, both locally and abroad. He has been to Korea, Myanmar, Japan, Ireland, Malaysia and Indonesia (multiple times) as invited speaker.

His interest in regional professional bodies remains unabated. He is a founding member of the Asean Association of Radiology, which elected him President from 1997-2000. In the local context, Dr Boey has similarly been a strong supporter of professional bodies. You may be surprised to know that he largely initiated the formation of the SRS and the Chapter of Radiologists in the Academy of Medicine. He presided over the SRS for multiple terms and chaired the Chapter of Radiologists from 1988-1990. He was also active in the Academy of Medicine, serving 6 years as Censor up to his retirement in 1996.

There is no question that Dr Boey is one of our most achievement-oriented, forward looking and entrepreneurial radiologists. His extensive contributions to the profession over almost half a century have placed him squarely among those few who have influenced most one of the most important stages of the development of diagnostic radiology in this country.

But glitter aside, what has truly impressed me about our 2009 FY Khoo Memorial Lecturer is his humanitarianism. He is one of those who never shirk from offering help to whoever approaches him for it, and would go the extra mile doing so every time. This, and his congeniality, obviously account for his popularity among all levels of staff, probably accounted for his colleagues electing him as President of the Government Medical and Dental Officers Association when he was only a registrar and probably too accounted for his being made Chairman and organiser of as fabulous and historic an event as SGH's first "Hospital Queen" Dinner and Dance!

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with the greatest pleasure that I present to you the 2009 FY Khoo Memorial Lecturer and a very long-time colleague and friend I admire, Dr Boey Hong Khim.

Chow Khuen Wai FAMS