

# Introducing HCA's new President, Dr Tan Poh Kiang

By Community Relations Team  
HCA Hospice Care

**D**r Tan Poh Kiang, a general practitioner, is the new President of HCA Hospice Care, taking over on date from Dr Seet Ai Mei who served in that office for 12 years.

In an interview, he shares some of his views and his background.

▶ **Why did you make the decision to take over from Dr Seet as President of HCA Hospice Care?**

I am a family physician, and increasingly, I have had to deal with end-of-life challenges. In recent times, I sensed a divine calling to devote some time to learn and contribute to the palliative care/hospice sector. Dr Seet had approached me in 2012 to succeed her as HCA Hospice Care President but I was not ready because I had many other responsibilities then. I promised to pray about it. When she asked me again in 2013, I didn't see any reason not to step forward, so here I am. I joined the HCA Council in May 2013.

▶ **What sort of future do you envision for hospice care in Singapore?**

My vision is that everyone who is near the end of life will get to die in the comfort of his own home, in the presence of his loved ones, with minimal suffering and with dignity.

▶ **What do you feel about the work Dr Seet has done?**

Dr Seet is my heroine. She has contributed tirelessly, and sacrificed much, towards the growth and development of the palliative care/hospice sector through her visionary leadership. Her years of service have led HCA to overcome many formidable challenges, and HCA is at present a robust organisation as a result of the capable Council and management teams she has nurtured.

▶ **You've already done quite a bit to help the less fortunate. Would you be able to share what you've done, and your motivation for your work?**

I came from a poor family and we lived in a HDB rental flat. With that background, I am always conscious of and grateful for the blessings I now enjoy. As such, I am aware of a higher calling to align my life to what I believe is God's essence and nature, namely, to pay special attention to and have compassion for the poor.

In 1996, I started a GP clinic in a mature low-income HDB estate to fulfill a calling to serve among those who are needy. I have been privileged to still serve those who are less fortunate through my collaboration with my neighbourhood voluntary welfare organisations – The Salvation Army and Beyond Social Services.

I also began to volunteer with Beyond Social Services in 1997 and have been one of its board members for the last five years.

▶ **Is there any way your experience in the military has influenced your work now?**

Most of what I know about leadership and leading teams was taught when I was serving National Service in the Singapore Army. I am deeply indebted to the Army for inculcating in me strong values such as loyalty, discipline, sacrifice, teamwork, fighting spirit, care for soldiers (especially subordinates under my command), professionalism and ethical behaviour. I am certain that whatever good I bring to HCA is borne out of the time I spent serving in the Army.

▶ **Tell us something about yourself and your family.**

I am blessed with a loving wife, Lie Joan, who has stuck with me tenaciously for 22 years! God has also blessed us with two wonderful daughters – Ella is 14, Alexandra is nine.

The best moments are when the four of us are having fun together – whether it is riding our bikes on Pulau Ubin or at Punggol Waterway, playing on the beach in some idyllic resort in Malaysia or baking at home and messing up the kitchen.

▶ **Do you have a message for our readers?**

The burden of palliative care on our society is heavy and will continue to increase in the future due to a rapidly ageing population. The daily grind of providing compassionate hospice care can sometimes be exhausting and discouraging. I am very mindful that none of us – caregivers, staff, volunteers – should ever attempt to do this task alone by ourselves. My guiding principle is a wise quote from Mother Teresa who said this:

"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things." ♥

A photograph of Dr Tan Poh Kiang, a middle-aged man with short black hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a dark brown, long-sleeved button-down shirt. He is standing outdoors on a balcony or walkway with a metal railing. In the background, there are buildings and a staircase. The photo is partially overlaid by a red text box.

Dr Tan Poh Kiang, 48, has been practising as a GP in a HDB neighbourhood since 1994. In recognition of his care and concern for the needy, Dr Tan was given the Humanitarian Volunteer of the Year Award in 2005 by the MILK (Mainly I Love Kids) Fund which reaches out to disadvantaged children and youth.