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DR. LYNN CHIAM'S
TAKE ON MANAGING SKIN-CARE
ISSUES IN SINGAPORE PG16

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PRINCIPAL
DOCTOR

IN CONVERSATION WITH...
DR LYNN CHIAM

APPROACHING SKIN-CARE ISSUES IN OUR **HOT &** **HUMID WEATHER**



1. **How did you start out as a dermatologist & what's your approach in building up a strong patient-following?**

After completing my housemanship, I initially did some training in psychiatry. I did enjoy my time in psychiatry but the lure of internal medicine was too great to resist and I switched to do further training in internal medicine. When I passed the membership exams, I was deciding between dermatology and renal medicine. In the end, my interest tipped in favour of dermatology. It doesn't hurt that dermatologists don't often get called back for emergencies!

I was trained at the National Skin Centre and was fortunate to have the guidance of Prof Goh Chee Leok, Prof Roy Chan, Prof Giam Yoke Chin and Dr Ng See Ket. I was also given a chance to further my training in paediatric dermatology and adult pigmentary disorders during my fellowship in the Netherlands.

In private practice, I have the privilege to spend more time with each patient. This allows me to better explain to my patients about their conditions and it translates to better compliance and treatment results. I try to give my patients some time for the information to sink in and for non-acute conditions; I ask them to spend some time to think about the various options before deciding on what is best suited for them.

2. **With growing awareness for skin-care & beauty these days, would you say that this has been a boon or bane for your business? What are the popular skin-treatments in your practice today?**

I think having more awareness is a good thing. When my patients have some understanding of the various options and different factors/triggers for certain conditions, I find it easier to discuss with them. They are also more amenable to certain treatments.

Pigmentation is a major concern in this part of the world, especially for women. Thus, anti-pigmentation treatment is one of the most requested therapies. Other common concerns include acne and acne scar removal, as well as anti-ageing/rejuvenation treatments.

3. **For Asian & local skin, what would you say are the common complaints or cases that have come to your attention?**

We have one of the highest rates of eczema in the world and this is the most common skin condition I see. The heat and humidity in Singapore not only triggers eczema but also acne. I do see fair numbers of expatriates who have a flare of their skin conditions after moving here. Asians are more concerned about the sun and the possible deleterious effects of UV radiations like pigmentation.

4. **How would you advise GP doctors on advising their patients to take good care of their skin given our hot & humid conditions here?**

I think the most important advice we can give our patients skin-wise is to start using sunscreen consistently and from young. We do get a lot of sun in Singapore and exposure to sunlight is responsible for 90% of skin ageing! Avoid exposure to sunlight between 10am-4pm when the sunrays are the strongest. Use a sunscreen with a SPF of 30 and above and one teaspoonful of sunscreen on the face is required to get the SPF factor stated.

For those wearing makeup, I will advise using powder base make up rather than liquid based ones as they are less likely to clog the skin and cause irritation and acne.

I find that many people like to use anti-bacteria soaps and bathe a few times a day due to the hot climate. This may not be ideal especially for those with sensitive skin. I will advise using a gentle cleanser and regular moisturizer.



5. **Would diet & other healthy lifestyle practices also help in maintaining good skin condition? And what kind of products or treatments would you recommend for people who may experience various skin problems under our weather conditions?**

A healthy lifestyle and diet is good for the health, including the skin. Physical and psychological stress are well-documented to trigger skin conditions like eczema, psoriasis and acne. For those with sensitive skin, I will advise against over-washing and to use gentle cleansers. For patients with acne, avoid moisturizers which are too rich.

6. **How would you like to partner with GPs so that their patients can also have the benefits of having radiant-looking skin besides enjoying healthy lifestyle & care from their GPs?**

It would be my pleasure to hold regular small group discussion forums with some partner GPs. These forums may be good platforms to discuss the management of regularly encountered skin conditions as well as more complicated cases.

7. **Are you able to set aside time for your own other pursuits & passions in life? Care to share with us?**

Between my practice and 4 kids, it is difficult to find some "me" time. I do try to squeeze in weekly Pilates class (when the kids are at their enrichment activities) and do read a fair bit after the children have gone to sleep. Like most women, I do enjoy shopping but have to do so online now! My husband and I both enjoy travelling. With the kids in tow, the destinations get closer and closer and the durations get shorter and shorter!

8. **Any interesting travel-places that you wish to share with your peers? And, not to forget, best food-dish you ever tasted, locally or overseas!**

Egypt- It is a place teeming with ancient history. The achievements of this ancient race bring wonders to us even today. I am not usually an adventurous foodie but I do enjoy my occasional lobster thermidor from Fish Bistro at Greenwood Avenue. I am a local girl at heart and will be perfectly happy at any hawker centre.

9. **What would you have been if you were not a dermatologist?**

Ballet dancer or an astronomer—those are my 2 other passions. However, I soon realised that I was not talented enough to earn a living via dancing and I saw enough stars while studying for my medical degree!

10. **Finally, any good words of advice for GPs aspiring to join the growing numbers of Aesthetic practitioners out there?**

I think many GPs are very successful Aesthetic practitioners and I am the one who need some advice!