

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN MENTOR AWARD 2023

Professor Julian Thumboo

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“For his outstanding contributions in guiding and mentoring clinicians and researchers, imparting knowledge, and instilling compassion, commitment, integrity, and a passion to learn.”

The filmmaker Steven Spielberg once said, “The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”

That is exactly what Professor Julian Thumboo has been doing and beyond. Besides medical and PhD students, he has supervised and mentored doctors training in Rheumatology and Internal Medicine as well as budding clinician-scientists and clinician-researchers, amongst many others.

In particular, Prof Thumboo, who was Head of the Department of Rheumatology & Immunology at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) from 2007 to 2014, has mentored a generation of rheumatologists. Some mentees have become mentors themselves, just as Prof Thumboo was inspired by his own mentors to become one. One such mentee, Associate Professor Andrea Low, currently helms the Department of Rheumatology & Immunology at SGH. Others have taken on senior positions in public healthcare institutions or private practice or are making significant contributions in their respective fields of research.

To ensure there are proper structures and environment to facilitate mentoring, Prof Thumboo initiated several programmes at the national and institution levels, such as the SingHealth Nurturing Clinician Researcher Scheme, benefitting more than those he mentored personally over the years.

The successes of his mentees is a reflection of Prof Thumboo's passion in helping and guiding individuals to fulfil their greatest potential. He believes that there is no success without a successor, and mentoring juniors helps mentors leave behind a legacy.

One of his mentees is SGH's Associate Professor Low Lian Leng, who took over as Director of SingHealth's Centre for Population Health Research and Implementation this year from Prof Thumboo, and is a recipient of the National Medical Research Council Health Promotion, Preventive Health, Population Health and Health Services Research Clinician Scientist Award. A/Prof Low describes Prof Thumboo as a dedicated, nurturing, and gentle mentor who devotes time to developing his mentees. By observing how Prof Thumboo conducted himself as a researcher and managed a large research centre and his collaborative leadership, A/Prof Low has learnt immensely and is now not only an independent researcher, but a clinician leader too.

Prof Thumboo's passion for mentoring has been recognised by the accolades he has received. Some of his recent awards include the National Day Award – Public Administration Medal (Bronze), SingHealth Excellence Award for Distinguished Mentor, and Duke-NUS Medical School Master Academic Clinician.

Prof Thumboo is also a keen researcher, having published more than 330 papers in peer-reviewed journals, and receiving several million dollars in individual grant funding. He also helped to secure \$20 million in grant funding for SGH, and \$21 million for the SingHealth Regional Health System in his role as Research Director of these organisations. His research interests are in population health, patient reported outcome measures, systemic lupus erythematosus and osteoarthritis.

For his outstanding contributions in guiding and mentoring clinicians and researchers, imparting knowledge and instilling compassion, commitment, integrity, and a passion to learn, Professor Julian Thumboo is awarded the National Outstanding Clinician Mentor Award 2023.