

It is 2000 and Lee Wei Lin is on a skiing holiday at the Bavarian Alps in Germany. Wearing a ski suit borrowed from her university classmate – a grandmother three times her age – the first-time skier is still getting to grips with her skis when she loses control on a slope and crashes into a guy, sending them both rolling onto the snow.

"Now that's what I call a magnetic attraction!" her ski instructor shouts.

Wei Lin isn't your typical scholar. Far from having her future all mapped out before her, she only thought of applying for a scholarship when she saw an advertisement in the newspapers. "I thought, why not just try for it? I wondered if my results were even good enough to be short-listed for the interviews!"

The amiable Wei Lin's self-deprecation masks a steely determination to be a pioneer in the little-known field of podiatry in Singapore. Taking up a PSC Overseas Specialist Award (now called the MOH Health Science Scholarship), she earned a Degree in Podiatry at the University of Salford in Britain, before returning to Singapore in 2002 to join Tan Tock Seng Hospital as a Podiatrist.

In just two years, she took over as Acting Manager of the Podiatry Department, and was promoted to Senior Podiatrist. In 2007, she moved to the Ministry of Health to work as an Assistant Manager (Allied Health), where she looks at the professional standards and development for Allied Health professionals in Singapore.

As a podiatrist, she has to look at feet, "loads of feet, and smell them too!"



## The Sole Surgeon

Lee Wei Lin

As a **podiatrist**, Lee Wei Lin studies and treats patients' feet and lower limbs, especially the foot and ankle.

**University:** University of Salford  
**Degree:** BSc (Hons) Podiatry

### How would you describe yourself as a student? (e.g. studious, sporty, etc.)

Definitely not studious! Haha! I guess I was really into my CCAs when I was a student at TJC. Some days I would find myself leading faculty members in sports competitions, cheerleading or other faculty competitions such as games or float-making. On other days I could be performing a song/dance item, render my services as an emcee for events, or simply just plan and organise activities and events.

### How were your undergraduate studies?

The lecturers and clinical supervisors were friendly and helpful. The lecturers never made you feel small and always welcomed and encouraged questions. Friends and classmates were great fun and they exposed me to the English culture. Tea and scones, anyone?

### How did your education help in your personal development as a student and as a person?

My education helped me see that there is so much more out there in the world, and that the quest for knowledge can never be limited. Learning never ends. Moreover, going overseas helped me see the importance of my family members, whom I may have underappreciated in the past.

### Are there any opportunities that are unique to your scholarship?

My scholarship allowed me to do a very

special course – Podiatry. Not many people know about podiatry and what work it entails. Moreover, the number of podiatrists in Singapore was hovering around 20. It was exciting to return as a pioneer of sorts and contribute much to the profession and people in Singapore.

### Why did you choose a career in Podiatry?

The work seemed interesting and it was a new and pioneering field. Also, it was healthcare-related.

### What are your primary responsibilities in your job?

When I was working as a podiatrist, I treated and managed patients with foot pain/problems. When I was the acting manager for the podiatry department, I was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the department, maintaining and introducing services, budgeting for operations and capital assets, profit/loss balance, and staff appraisals on top of my clinical work. Now in MOH, I am looking at the professional standards and development of the Allied Health professions in Singapore.

### Can you describe a typical day at work?

Back at the hospital, I would start seeing patients at about 8.30a.m. Depending on the patient case, I may be debriding calluses, enucleating corns, removing an in-grown toenail, performing a gait analysis, or manufacturing a pair of insoles/ orthoses. I may also visit the wards to treat some inpatients. After lunch, I may be doing

administrative work, looking at ways to improve the department or work processes, or attending meetings with management.

Over at MOH, I do more administrative work. The job requires me to think strategically and plan for the future of Allied Health professions. That is quite a challenge! I still do half a day of clinics once a week.

### What qualities do you think are needed to succeed in your job?

Patience and compassion.

As an afterword, Wei Lin picks out her skiing adventure at the Bavarian Alps as one of her memorable trips, "but not because of the guy I crashed into! There was a beautiful cottage at the top of the ski slopes; the only warm place in the cold snow. They served the most delightful cheesecake and whipped cream. The cow that produced the milk for the whipped cream was mooing in the barn behind!"

From knocking strangers down to helping patients stand on their feet, one feels Wei Lin has come full circle. But you won't find this lifetime learner resting on her laurels. In fact, don't be surprised to find her enrolling in University again when she is past her retirement age.

“ Consider the work you want to do in the future, and if the scholarship will help you achieve what you want. ”