



**COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY C13**

**GUEST SPEAKER: MR LIM SEE WAH**

Dear Parents, Guardians & Graduands,

Today marks a key milestone in your life. To parents, my heartiest congratulations. After years of nurturing, your son or daughter has finally completed this highly sought after university education in NUS. They are well prepared for the rigor of working life ahead of them, and should have a bright future. I know that because I too graduated from the NUS Pharmacy Department many years ago.

For the Graduands, I would like to offer each & every one of you a warm welcome to the league of working adults. For those who have completed the university course with distinction, congratulations. For those who think you have not done as well, don't worry. After you graduate today, all of you are on the same starting line again.

Your achievement over the next decade depend on your ability & willingness to tap the opportunities and leverage on the training & development that you have received so far. "But where are the opportunities?", you may ask. Let me just say that opportunity and problem are twin brothers. To find opportunity, you must look at the problem.

The number one problem that confronts humanity is probably climate change. We are in a race against time and it seems that we are not gaining an upper hand in that race. Solving this problem will be a key priority (or challenge) of society going ahead, and will generate many new opportunities.

There is no denial that the size of world population is contributing to the problem of climate change. It's been estimated that the world population today stands at 7 billion. With improvements in healthcare &

basic sanitation, people are living longer across the globe. Many societies across the world will be greying. We are experiencing this first hand in Singapore with a rapidly aging society.

This poses a challenge to society in general, and the healthcare sector in particular. How are we going to ensure that we not only are living longer, but also leading healthy and meaningful life as we age? How can we afford the care needed for such an outcome? It's a riddle for you to solve, and I believe it is not only the pharmacists amongst you who can contribute towards solving this riddle.

To better understand the unprecedented challenges & opportunities that await, I would like to quote what Mr George Yeo said in a recent article "The Tao of Life after Politics". He said: "Human society is going through profound change, perhaps as dramatic as the shift from nomadic existence to settled agricultural life or from feudal to industrial society. The motive force is, of course, the digital revolution."

When I was in Junior College, I read "The Third Wave", a book written by Alvin Toffler. He wrote about the digital revolution and how society is going to transition from the industrial age to the information age. It was an interesting read, but I was quite clueless as to what is the nature of this transformation. Now, we are augmented by the power of this digital revolution in everyday life. If you don't believe me, just google using your 4G Smart Phone.

What we have witnessed so far in technology is probably just the first phase of the revolution. It has made us more efficient. We are now entering the next phase where technology will make us more effective.

Take the example of IBM Watson. Look up WATSON's website and you will come across this statement: **"From hospitals to kitchens, Watson has clocked in to work and is already taking impressive strides across industries. But to understand the power of Watson, we must first understand cognitive computing and how it enhances, scales, and accelerates human expertise."** It is no longer about doing things faster, it's about how human expertise can be enhanced through collaborating with machines that have cognitive abilities. They learn like humans do.

Because of the exponential growth in computing power, and the digitization of everything, we now have BIG DATA. A 2013 Forbes magazine article defines BIG Data as **“a collection of data from traditional and digital sources inside and outside your company that represents a source for ongoing discovery and analysis”**. While it is possible to have big data, ultimately, we needed human input to set the right algorithm to ensure that the output is sensible. We will need the human decision to act on the outcome of the big data analysis.

As a result of the enhancement of computing power, technology is accelerating change in every field. The major change in the pharmaceutical industry comes from the application of genomics and proteomics. While small molecule pharmaceutical remained the mainstay of treatment today, many of the breakthrough treatments come from big molecular biologics. For instance, Cancer treatment has been revolutionized by biologics, so much so that some types of the cancer are today becoming more of a chronic than terminal disease. Further development of genomics, proteomics and 3D printing will probably herald the new era of personalized medicine.

Whenever there is seismic change, there is unprecedented opportunity. Your generation grows up immersed in this evolving technological environment. You have some of the most powerful tools at your disposal to innovate, and to find solutions to the many daunting problems, be it healthcare delivery, understanding complex problems or communications.

Another reason for you to be optimistic is that you are in Singapore. Whichever country you come from, you have received your finest & highest education in Singapore. You have a chance to be in Singapore or remained in Asia, the epi center of global growth. According to the report published by United Nations in Jan 2015, East Asia remains the world’s fastest-growing region, with GDP growth estimated at 6.1 per cent in 2014. In the outlook period, the region is projected to see stable growth of 6.1 per cent in 2015 and 6.0 per cent in 2016. Each year, almost a trillion dollars are being added to the economy. The opportunities that are within your grasps are simply mind boggling.

As you venture out into the work force facing unprecedented challenges & opportunities, I hope you will be rooted in certain core values so as not to be swept away by the torrent of changes. I think most, if not all people, would have the pursuit of happiness as a fundamental goal in life. Unfortunately, you may soon find that happiness may be elusive as you venture into the working life. It’s a fact that the

pace of life is getting faster & faster; with more data & information, it means there is more to process and more relations to manage both offline & online. It's for you to strike that right balance. Remember that amassing financial wealth by itself will not bring happiness. On the contrary, blindly pursuing financial gain usually leads to great dissatisfaction with life. I think the secret to happiness in life is quite simple. Firstly, fill your heart with love & compassion. Practice it with deeds through providing your parents with tender loving care. Secondly, render help to others where possible. Third; maintain excellent interpersonal relationships, be it at home or at work; fourth: Have a decent level of income.

I would like to share with you some key thoughts or beliefs that have served me well thus far:

Experience number 1 : There is a certain timing, order & sequence to life. If you messed up the timing & sequences, your life will get messed up too. Looking back, the first decade after graduation was a critical period in my life. My role was transformed from a carefree student to a working professional. I decided to build my career in the pharmaceutical industry, earning my salary to upkeep my own life & contributing to the family, looking after my mum, getting first my HDB flat, getting married, becoming a father, and deciding to become an entrepreneur. Many of the things that happened in the second decade post-graduation were built on the foundation of that first decade.

Experience Number 2: Know what you want, and act on it when the opportunity beckons.

When I was almost 31 years old, I sought the opportunity to manage Pan-Malayan Pharmaceuticals, a family owned pharmaceutical business established since the 1940s. Somehow, the owner was convinced & accepted my proposal. I became probably one of the youngest managing directors of a rather old company. With some luck & fortitude, I managed to grow the business till today.

Thus, I would urge those who have ideas to act on it. Over analysis often lead to paralysis.

Experience Number 3: Keep growing & upgrading throughout your life:

I have been asking myself, how do I become a better person in 5 years' time compared to who I am today? There is no easy answer. I learn from people I interacted with. I also like to read biographies. You will then realize that people who are great are also quite ordinary. It's just that

they are energized by a certain cause in life, made extra-ordinary efforts and wise choices at critical junctures, rising up to the challenge of life & triumphing in the end.

So, to all the young, bright and promising Graduands seated here, I hope all of you will rise to the challenge of our time, create a good life for yourself and contributes towards the betterment of humanity.

Best of luck to all of you.