



in 1997 to Singapore General Hospital before moving on to National University Hospital in 2001.

"Colorectal cancer is the number one cancer not just in Singapore but it is also a problem for many developed, as well as, developing countries. It is a cancer afflicting patients commonly in their sixth and seventh decade," highlighted by Dr. Tsang.

With an ageing population in Singapore, there will be more patients afflicted with this cancer. "Trouble is we do not know what are the exact causes of colorectal cancer although links have been made to genetic factors and environmental influence. It is different from causative link between Hepatitis B and liver cancer or between smoking and lung cancer," Dr. Tsang stressed.

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- Dr. Charles Tsang

Vigilance is the best way to avoid colorectal cancer. Most cancers are believed to arise from precancerous lesions called polyps. If the polyps are detected and removed, we would have prevented a cancer from developing. We should advocate a strategy of screening in asymptomatic average risk patients starting from the age of 50. Patients with a strong family history will need to be seen and counseled and perhaps screened earlier, compared to those with no family history.

Dr. Tsang advises us to be personally responsible for ourselves - to go forth and to encourage our loved ones for screening once they hit 50 years of age. We should be aware of symptoms of colorectal cancer such as change in bowel

habits, blood in our stools, decreased stool caliber and presence of mucus, loss of weight in a short space of time and persistent abdominal pain.

National University Hospital has strong links with top colorectal units and Universities around the world. For the benefit of the patients, they are very active in clinical research and have also been in the forefront of treatment for colorectal cancers, functional disorders such as incontinence and anal fistulas.

National University Hospital also has a very established and competitive training program for doctors around the region. To date, they have trained more than 25 surgeons from ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Bangladesh and Myanmar. They are even receiving requests from the UK, Australia and the Middle East now.

Through National University Cancer Institute Singapore, National University Hospital is working closely with the Singapore Cancer Society as well as various community groups and the media for a comprehensive outreach program that extends beyond the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

DR. CHARLES TSANG

Dr. Charles Tsang joined National University Hospital on 17 November 2001. It was the most rewarding 10 years as they grew to become a reputable academic colorectal unit in Singapore, with a current strength of seven specialist surgeons. With a dedicated one-stop facility catering to both benign diseases and colorectal cancer, National University Hospital has been able to offer a full spectrum of management options for the patients.

Dr. Tsang entered the specialty of colorectal diseases in 1993. In 1994, he went to train at the Centre for Digestive Diseases at Leeds General Infirmary in UK. Thereafter, he pursued an advanced Residency in Colon & Rectal Surgery at the University of Minnesota, USA. He returned