

## 2019 Donald Gunn Lecturer

### CITATION ON PROF JOSEPH THAMBIAH - Francis Wong Keng Lin

1. Good Morning, Distinguished Guests, Professors, Teachers, Seniors, Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen. It brings me great honour to deliver the citation for this year's Donald Gunn Lecturer: Associate Professor Joseph Thambiah. Those who have trained under Prof Thambiah or "Prof JT", as we fondly call him, will always remember his teachings, which I would highlight some during this citation. More importantly, he has influenced many residents' lives and careers, including mine.
2. But first things first, for a start: Lesson number 1: Punctuality! For morning teachings, 715 am means we are to be seated by 715 am, not a second later. Those who stroll in late will be given the stern look from him, our disciplinarian. Let's get going with the citation then!
3. In 2011, six of us were the selected as the inaugural batch of orthopaedic surgery residents to be trained by Prof JT. Prior to this, training of residents, or previously termed "trainees", was conducted in a nation-wide level, where orthopaedic surgical trainees rotated amongst different hospitals.

This would be the first time that we would be trained in one institution, under the watchful eyes of a single programme director. Throughout these 6 years (7 years for me as clinician scientist track), Prof JT was the shepherd of our flock, guiding us, the lost sheep.

4. How was Prof JT's style of teaching? This is best exemplified by the way an eagle teaches its young to fly. The mother eagle teaches the young to fly literally by throwing them off the cliff. She nudges the baby eagle closer to the edge of the nest and then pushes the baby eagle out of the nest, leaving the baby to free fall to an apparently sure death.

However, in a flash, the mother flies down and catches the little one on her back, and flies up again to deposit the baby in the nest, which gradually has been made unbearable with sharp sticks and twigs. This is then repeated again over and over till the baby learns to fly.

Prof JT shows tough love. He pushes us to the boundaries, gets us out of our comfort zone.

Smashed up tibial plateau? Plan the fixation and be ready to fix it at R4 level! Night call with Poly traumas with a combination of closed and open fractures? Be ready to operate deep into the night with your proposed surgical plan as the main surgeon. Fear not, because at your lowest point, at your darkest hour, he will be there to bail you out.

His style of training our "testicular fortitude" as he politely calls it, as decision makers in orthopaedic surgery, especially in the field of trauma, has served me well thus far

in my position as an orthopaedic consultant that does general calls and trauma on a regular basis.

5. In the real world of orthopaedic surgery, there will always be the political battle of light and dark sides. The battle continues for generations, where the younglings sometimes get embroiled into the feuds of the older generation. Many of us, me included, get lost in the battles. Shall we stay as Jedi padawans? Or with the Sith empire overtaking the galaxy, shall we just bow down to the dark side and take up the Sith training to survive? Many times, we feel lost, trapped and much in despair. Where does Prof JT fit into this picture?
6. Prof JT is our Yoda. He provides timely advice, keeps us rooted to the ground, and if need be, fights for us. I myself, at many occasions, have sought his counsel for many matters, and the advice given has always been priceless. No, he does not pander to the wind, he does not give in to temptations, but always reminds us of our moral and spiritual compass, and to keep us fighting for the right reasons.
7. All in all, Prof JT has shown us the love of a father. Christmas season will not be complete without celebrating at his house and he always joins us for social occasions such as weddings, dinners and even sports events.

He has been a pillar of strength for many of us, and especially for me, I thank him for all the advice he has given me, for me to reach my goals and to be truly happy.

8. Without further ado, please join me in welcoming the Donald Gunn Lecturer of 2019, Associate Professor Joseph Thambiah.