

Nurturing Minds, Touching Lives

Post graduate studies in the Department of Medicine



A mind for research, a head for business

Upon completing his PhD studies at NUS in 2005, Jonathan Tan opted to broaden his horizons, from both a career and geographic point of view. He decided to venture abroad, and joined Health Technology Analysts (HT Analysts), a health economics consultancy based in Sydney Australia. The company specialises in providing health technology assessment reports and health economic evaluations across a range of therapeutic areas.

“I knew that I wanted to do something different after completing my PhD studies, instead of taking the traditional route of moving to do post-doctorate research. I was looking for work that is intellectually stimulating, where I can learn new skills and knowledge. I was also interested in the area of health economics. Venturing overseas was a clear decision, as currently there are very few companies or academic institutions in Singapore that are doing similar type of consultancy work in this area. And even the few organisations that are moving into health economics consultancy would not have been able to provide me with the exposure or give me the level of responsibility that my current job affords me,” explained Jonathan.

During his PhD studies, Jonathan’s own research focused on the genetic susceptibility of diabetes in the Singapore population. He had to examine the many samples collected from a number of earlier healthcare studies, including the National Health Survey, the Singapore Malay Eye Study and the Singapore Diabetes Cohort Study. Jonathan then analysed the data and finally put the pieces together, to present the study outcome. As part of his research, Jonathan collaborated with scientists at the Genome Institute of Singapore, to utilise various genotyping platforms. During his graduate studies, Jonathan was co-supervised by both Prof Tai E Shyong, from the Department of Medicine and Prof Chia Kee Seng from the Department of Community, Occupational & Family Medicine. Having two co-supervisors gave Jonathan additional opportunities to be exposed to a range of different scientific platforms.

Despite migrating from a research setting to work in a business environment for his current job, Jonathan still relies on his PhD training. His in-depth understanding of biostatistics and epidemiology, together with the skills he developed from publishing four papers in peer-reviewed journals have been important to the work he does at HT Analysts. Jonathan has built up strong domain know-how in the field of diabetes, which is useful for his work in health economics, as this disease is a major health burden on nations around the world. Jonathan’s experience in interacting with clinicians undertaking diabetes research and patients suffering from diabetes has given him insights into the medical community. Furthermore, the challenging research processes have established Jonathan’s meticulous attention to detail and highly analytical mind – the same qualities that are serving him well in his job at HT Analysts.

Jonathan also proves that it is possible to make an impact upon the health of the mankind through working in business. At HT Analysts, Jonathan contributes to the well-being of the population, by ensuring that governments' public healthcare expenditure on drugs are optimally utilised, leading to maximum benefits for the people. In a nutshell, he evaluates the economic benefits of various drugs and therapies. This involves analysing both technical and economic aspects of a particular drug or treatment (such as efficacy, costs and benefits), in order to uncover evidence that can be used to justify why the drug or treatment should be reimbursed by health authorities. Jonathan's scientific and research background enable him to plough through complex clinical studies to reveal the underlying data, which is important for subsequent economic analysis.

“Having moved into a business setting has really given me the opportunity to widen my career options. I am still very interested in the health economics consultancy sector and may choose to stay in my current role at HT Analysts, with the aim of progressing up to a managerial, and then partner level. Alternatively, I could also choose to join a pharmaceutical company, and here there are a number of different career paths open to me, ranging from sales and marketing to strategic planning. I may even choose to go back into a research setting if the conditions are right. In particular I find the area of health economics research to be very interesting. So, there are a number of options available, and I definitely am looking forward to seeing what the future will bring!” said Jonathan.

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