

## The Vision Virtuoso

Mr Yap Tiong Peng's passion for optometry goes beyond prescribing specs

**START A CONVERSATION** on vision disorders with Mr Yap Tiong Peng and he might not be finished explaining about their causes and treatments until the next day. That's how passionate he is at what he does.

A senior consultant optometrist at IGARD Group, an optometry clinic offering professional primary eye-care and optical services, Mr Yap received his optometry training in Manchester, England. A large part of his studies focused on the 'Neuroscience of Vision', including the understanding of the psychophysical aspects of vision and the visual processing in the human brain. He had the opportunity to study at Imperial College in London where he pursued research in investigating the neural aspects of retinal function in the eye. He was trained by the American Neuro-Optometric Rehabilitation Association in vision therapy which helps people in improving the functionality of their vision. He is a member of the American College of Optometrists in Vision Development, British Association of Behavioural Optometry and the Australasian College of Behavioural Optometry.

Mr Yap is also a visiting optometrist at the University Health Centre at the National University of Singapore and the Medical Centre at Nanyang Technological University, as well as an expert speaker at various conferences locally and internationally.

Let us get to know more about this boyish optometrist, shall we?

**What attracted you to optometry? Please share interesting stories with us on how you got started.**

**Mr Yap:** While I was growing up, I realised that my professional capacity as an optometrist amalgamates the two scopes of my continual growing interests: widely described in the sphere of hard science – mathematics, physics, optics, neuroscience, and that of a clinician



– personal vocational calling of personalised care of the eyes. As my dear mother was a school teacher who needed glasses, I wanted to be the one to care for her visual needs. The love stemmed from there.

### **What is your specialisation?**

**Mr Yap:** I am currently working for IGARD Group which comprises a team of overseas-trained optometrists. My special interests are in Orthoptics (binocular vision), Behavioural Optometry and Visual Neuroscience. Much of these involve children (Paediatric Optometry), but I see many adults as well. I provide orthokeratology refractive therapy for myopia (shortsightedness) and orthoptic vision therapy for amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (eye alignment problem) and functional deficits in vision, such as poor ability in eye focusing, eye alignment and visual tracking problems, and also visual perceptual issues.

### **As a clinician, what do you want to accomplish at the end of each day?**

**Mr Yap:** My mission at work in IGARD is to give the best professional opinion on primary eye care needs within the scope of everything an eye doctor can do with the exception of surgery. The scope of our services are designed in a most professional way in which I benchmark myself – IGARD stands for improving vision and guarding against reading difficulties.

### **When it comes to vision correction/therapy in children, what treatments do you normally recommend?**

**Mr Yap:** The problem with vision starts in early childhood, and some deficiencies in sight can hamper learning. Prolonged reading difficulties and lack of confidence have dire effects on children's development and catching up with schoolwork. At my practice, we offer vision therapy and precision colour filters for the young ones who suffer

from binocular vision anomalies and visual stress. I enjoy helping children with vision difficulties and share joy with their parents as their child makes progress.

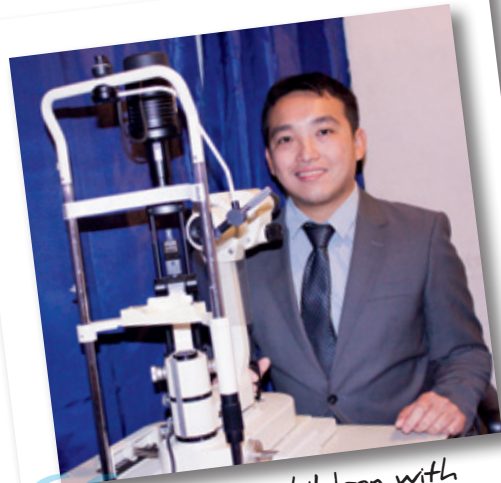
### **What do you find most satisfying about your job?**

**Mr Yap:** As a clinician, I keep in touch with international experts in my field and keep myself abreast of new cutting-edge technologies. I get a sense of satisfaction in providing the latest products and services and offering the best to our patients and customers. For example, we can provide customised lens that are so personalised like our thumbprint to maximise visual comfort for the discerning user.

My wife's family member came to me after using glasses for years. She was one of the firsts to receive such customised lens. Her feedback just made my day. Although she had a previous pair with the same degrees, her new glasses were clearer and her eyes were more relaxed and made it more comfortable for her. It was the first pair of spectacles which was lightweight enough not to leave marks on her nose.

### **Some patients who have previously worn glasses think that routine eye examination with an optometrist or ophthalmologist is a waste of time, as they already know their prescription degrees anyway. Please explain the importance of these eye examinations?**

**Mr Yap:** Optometrists generally examine the eyes with the main purpose of evaluating vision; they are adept in using the appropriate ophthalmic lenses to remediate the problem, including eyestrain and Computer Vision Syndrome. Most patients do not have eye diseases, but optometrists routinely screen for them, including Glaucoma, Cataract, Retinal Abnormalities, etc. Seeing an optometrist ensures that your visual issues are examined in relation to the health and functional status of



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your eyes – all with the convenience to the patient as the tests are completed quickly and accurately.

An assessment of Corneal Health is part of a full assessment for contact lens wearers. Some visual conditions require further evaluation, and optometrists are qualified to conduct this within the practice (e.g. Corneal Topography, Ocular Aberrometry, Visual Field Assessment, Optical Coherent Tomography). Most vision problems can be remediated with spectacles, contact lenses and vision therapy.

### **What do you do to continually advance your knowledge/skills in eye care/optometry?**

**Mr Yap:** I travel overseas for continuing education, most recently to the University of California, Berkeley, and Pacific University in Oregon, USA. Currently, I am working locally on a research investigating the 'brainwaves' (electroencephalogram) of children suffering from amblyopia (lazy eyes), together with an International team from London, Sydney and Melbourne. I also keep myself updated with the new cutting-edge technologies in my field. I make it a point to keep in contact with colleagues and international experts in my field to keep myself abreast of the latest trends and treatments in optometry. eh