



Administration: The Backbone of Research

By Goh Hui Lin, Assistant Manager, Office of Research, SingHealth

Many have asked why I chose to go into research or scientific administration with my science degree. I am constantly being asked questions such as – ‘why not pursue a PhD or a Medical degree with your perfect grades?’ or ‘don’t you want to improve lives and give back to society?’

The truth is, that was what I thought when I first graduated too. I planned on obtaining a scholarship and pursuing my post-graduate studies overseas. Like most students, I decided to try to gaining some work experience before furthering my education by signing up for a job in research administration. Needless to say, I never filled in my scholarship application, as I have been involved in research administration ever since.



There is a dedicated administrative team supporting research in SingHealth. We work behind-the-scenes, behind the medical discoveries and scientific breakthroughs. There is a lot to be done, from anchoring and facilitating research grants and the allocation of funds, to drafting policies for better coordination or centralisation as well as the facilitation of necessary paperwork to ensure seamless processes. Singapore has built up robust and strong fundamentals in healthcare excellence over the years, and no doubt research

administration has played an important role in this.

Over the last few years, we have seen various new initiatives in the Academic Medical Centre (AMC), such as the set-up of new Academic Clinical Programmes (ACPs), Joint Research Institutes, as well as the coordination and centralisation of various offices, such as the Joint Office of Research. These were joint efforts from researchers, senior leadership, and administrators who had a collective vision to create greater social and economic impacts for the nation.

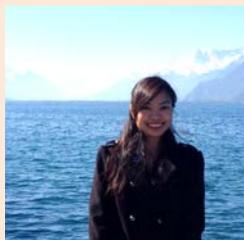
The joys and challenges of research administration are vigorous and constantly draw me to this field. As we face increasingly constrained resources, bolder initiatives will need to be drawn to ensure that we play to our strengths, and that there will be maximum administrative efficiency.

Many may feel that most initiatives have top-down implementation; however, we need to ensure that everyone understands the intent of these initiatives. Engagement, therefore, is an important part of the policy-making process. It is neither new nor something that we are just doing now. Over the years, we have increasingly intensified our efforts to engage with as many stakeholders as possible through various platforms such as dialogues, townhall or discussion forums.

Moving forward, I believe research administration needs to continue to be dynamic, and constantly look into long-term innovative solutions. As we facilitate and support research excellence within

SingHealth institutions, we further need to ensure our research complements and synergises with other healthcare clusters. While our healthcare system was ranked most efficient in the world in 2014 by Bloomberg¹, we should not rest on our laurels and be complacent. With our nation facing new healthcare challenges everyday – be it a rapidly ageing population, or emerging new viruses like Zika; research administration needs to be increasingly competitive and efficient to support our researchers.

About the Author



Ms Goh Hui Lin joined the SingHealth Office of Research after more than 5 years of experience at A*STAR's Biomedical Research Council (BMRC) and Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC). As an Assistant Manager of the Strategy Management & Engagement team, Hui Lin is involved in the planning, development and implementation of research policies and governance in support of the national research and healthcare agenda.

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¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/infographics/most-efficient-health-care-around-the-world.html>