

Rosie Young

A Lifetime of Selfless Service

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Cover image: Professor Rosie Young passing the torch, at the homecoming dinner in celebration of the 130th anniversary of HKU Faculty of Medicine, 2017. Courtesy of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Hong Kong.

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Foreword

Professor Rosie Young is such an inspirational figure to all of us in medicine and the wider community in Hong Kong and beyond that I commend Professor Moira Chan for putting together her life story in this monograph, the draft of which was my faithful companion on my first long-haul travel abroad following the three-plus year-long COVID-19 pandemic. In the same way that we learn from managing the pandemic—that we need to be vigilant, astute, persistent while flexible, and work as a team—the story of Professor Young teaches us to be inquisitive, perseverant, selfless, loyal, and collegial in becoming a clinician, teacher, researcher, and an administrator.

Hong Kong must be eternally grateful to Professor Young, who has dedicated her whole life to serving the city that she loves so much. During her illustrious career, Professor Young has touched the lives of countless people. Many of her students have gone on to become leaders in medicine, serving the community with compassion, knowledge, skill, and humility. Her patients leave her consultation room with their mind at ease and their anxiety relieved, knowing that they are in the best of hands. The politicians who have had the good fortune to receive shrewd advice from her have used it judiciously in bringing about policies that have helped to improve the health care of our citizens. And within the University of Hong Kong, everyone knows they can always count on Professor Young, as she is such a staunch supporter of her alma mater. Indeed, I have to personally thank Professor Young, for if it was not for her referral of me to Professor T. K. Chan back in 1991 when I was at a crossroads in my academic career, I

would not have had the opportunity to return to Hong Kong and imitate her dedication to serving the university in the past three decades.

Professor Young's devotion to medicine and her patients never fails to amaze me. At the time of writing, Professor Young, who is ninety-two years young, still comes into her office every day to see patients and teach students in the clinics. She stays abreast of the latest advances in not only her own discipline, endocrinology, but generally everything else in general medicine. She is the most regular attendee of the Department of Medicine's weekly Grand Round and annual Medical Forum and never fails to stay the course of these meetings!

Professor Moira Chan, our famed medical historian cum professor of medicine, is similarly energetic, expending such enormous time researching the history of medicine in Hong Kong after her retirement. Her herculean effort has culminated in her previous publications of *A Medical History of Hong Kong* series of three books and this latest biography of Professor Young. Like her previous publications, this new addition is also resource-rich and includes not just the history of medicine in Hong Kong but also that of the city in the last one hundred years. Professor Chan's vibrant depiction of the life of this petite giant in medicine—the one and only Professor Rosie Young—makes this book a must read for all.

To reciprocate our love and respect for Professor Rosie Young, I would like to dedicate the following poem by Robert Burns (1759–1796),¹ the celebrated 'national poet' of Scotland, a country where Professor Young has such fond memories.

*O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.*

1. Scottish Poetry Library, <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/red-red-rose/>.

*A fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luv am I;
And I will luv thee still, my Dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.*

*Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
I will luv thee still, my Dear,
While the sands o'life shall run.*

*And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel, a while!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!*

Professor Chak-sing Lau, MBBS, JP
Dean of Medicine
Chair and Daniel C. K. Yu Professor in Rheumatology and Clinical
Immunology
The University of Hong Kong

Preface

Professor Young Tse Tse Rosie is an accomplished doctor, a distinguished academic, and a highly respected public figure in Hong Kong. Born in the city in 1930, where she received her education, she completed her post-graduate training in the United Kingdom. On returning after her professional examination to become a specialist in internal medicine in 1960, she served her alma mater, the University of Hong Kong, and the community in Hong Kong, with great devotion, even up to now at the grand old age of ninety-two.

In 1954, she was appointed after internship as a clinical assistant at the Department of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong (HKU). She was promoted through the ranks to a personal chair professor in 1974. She established the first endocrinology and metabolic diseases unit, which became the clinical and research centre in Hong Kong, training all the subspecialists in that discipline in the following two to three decades. Despite the heavy teaching and clinical duties, she managed to conduct relevant research until heavy administrative duties and public service work made it impossible for her to continue with research and clinical duties. Her talent for administration as sub-dean and then dean of the Faculty of Medicine was recognized by Vice-Chancellor Rayson Huang, who appointed her to be one of the two pro-vice-chancellors in 1985, a position which she held until 1993. When Vice-Chancellor Wang Gungwu retired in 1995, she declined the offer of being considered for the interim vice-chancellorship, which might eventually lead to appointment as vice-chancellor. She agreed to serve as acting pro-vice-chancellor for another year in 1996, and

later as acting dean of students for two years before her official retirement from HKU in 1999.

As sub-dean of the Faculty of Medicine, she became a member of the Medical Council in 1978. However, her major contributions to public service in medicine began after she was elected chairman of the Medical Council in 1988. As chairman of the council, she championed reforms of the council and was responsible for implementing the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill of 1995 to have two registries in the council: one for practitioners and one for specialists.

In the late 1980s, the government decided to carry out health care reforms and split the Medical and Health Department into two institutions: the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health. The Hospital Authority was established by statute, independent of the civil service and funded separately by the government, to integrate the management structures of all public and subvented hospitals in Hong Kong. In 1988, Professor Young was invited to be a member of the Provisional Hospital Authority to lay the groundwork, administrative and legal, for the Hospital Authority. When the Hospital Authority was formed in 1990, she became a member of the Hospital Authority Board. In 1989, she was appointed chairman of the Working Party on Primary Health Care to assess the status of primary care services in Hong Kong and to recommend reforms to improve them. Thus, Professor Young contributed to a spectrum of reforms that resulted in better hospital, outpatient, and preventive health services in Hong Kong.

After she stepped down as pro-vice-chancellor, Professor Young was recruited to chair the Education Commission, which was established in 1984 as recommended by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) International Panel invited by the government to look into means of improving the quality of education in Hong Kong. She was responsible for the publication of Education Commission Reports No. 6 and 7 with proposals to improve the languages of instruction, the quality of teachers, as well as quality assurance of education in Hong Kong.

Few individuals in Hong Kong have contributed so much to medical education and administration in HKU, and medical services and general

education in the community at large for so long. It is not surprising that she has received numerous awards and honours from her alma mater and other universities in Hong Kong, and from the governments of both the former and the present administration for her dedicated and distinguished public service.

This book is prepared to commemorate Professor Young's seventieth year of service to HKU in 2023 and to honour her for her loyalty and devotion to serve the university and the community. It is organized into two parts with six chapters. Part 1 has three chapters, Professor Young's life story in three stages chronologically: from birth to fifteen years; her secondary, university, and postgraduate education; and her career in medicine, administration, and public service. Part 2 is a thematic approach to her contributions in administration to HKU and in the field of medicine and educational policy to the community in three separate chapters. Her life stories and accomplishments are described in the context of the socio-economic backdrop in Hong Kong at the time.

The word 'service' usually means a system that provides something that the public needs, organized by the government or a private agency. The definition does not indicate whether the public has to pay for the service or not, or whether the service has been given free of charge by the provider and not the institution he or she represents. I felt the need to explain the nature of the service provided by Professor Young, as indicated in the title of the book: *Rosie Young: A Lifetime of Selfless Service*. After graduation, Professor Young was employed by HKU to provide clinical service, teaching, and research in the Department of Medicine. Her initial public service in medicine began when she was a member of the Medical Council in 1978, and the work did not occupy much of her time then. By the late 1980s, her public service work had grown to be so enormous that she had to give up her clinical and research work. Because she felt she was unable to perform her duties fully, she voluntarily requested the university to reduce her salary by half. As a result, her public service work was not paid for by anyone or any institution. After retirement, she continued her public service work in the same manner. In fact, all her services to the community from the late 1980s had been given voluntarily and freely with

dedication. We are all grateful for her wisdom, generosity, and altruism to provide a better life for the citizens of Hong Kong.

The background information for this book was drawn from primary sources: Colonial Office archives, Hong Kong Government reports, annual and special reports produced by the Hong Kong Medical and Health Department, HKU reports and websites, Hong Kong government websites, and newspapers such as *South China Morning Post*. Secondary sources include a number of books and journals. The personal information on Professor Young and her work at HKU have been obtained from interviews that I conducted with Professor Young in person and online, as well as my personal contact with her first as a student and then as a colleague in recent years. Since the minutes of the University Council, Senate, and the Faculty of Medicine are not in the public domain, I have relied on information from the reports of HKU and what Professor Young was able to provide. I do not claim to know Professor Young well, but I believe few people do. Most of us admire her from a distance. The manuscript has been reviewed by Professor Young for accuracy. Finally, I wish to stress that the opinions expressed in this book are entirely my own.

Moira Chan-Yeung
Vancouver
October 2023

Author's Note

After some deliberation I have decided to address Professor Rosie Young in the first part of the book as Rosie and as Professor Young from the time she was promoted to professor of medicine at HKU. Doctors were addressed as professors after their promotion to professorship. In this book, all photographs without a specified source were provided by Professor Young.

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