



# Dr. Siu-Fun Wong: the major roles of an oncology pharmacist

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## Editor's note

The *Clinical Gynecologic Oncology*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition released in 2017 is regarded as a must-have, readable and most comprehensive reference for diagnosis and treatment of gynecologic cancers. As far as we know, the 6<sup>th</sup> edition and 8<sup>th</sup> edition of this book have been translated into Chinese, which have aroused tremendous attention in the field of gynecologic oncology in China. To benefit the physicians and patients in China and to further the communication in the field, we launched a project to dig the stories and ideas behind the book, and to share the recognized leaders' stories and insights of the field.

During this project, we were honoured to conduct an interview with Dr. Siu-Fun Wong, the Associate Dean of Assessment and Scholarship, and a Full Professor at Chapman University School of Pharmacy, who shared her insights of hot issues in the field of medicine, stories of the book as an author and advices to readers.

## Expert's introduction

Dr. Siu-Fun Wong, PharmD, is Associate Dean of Assessment and Scholarship, and a Full Professor at Chapman University School of Pharmacy. Dr. Wong joined Western University in 1997 as one of the founding faculty. Dr. Wong is also a volunteer Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) College of Medicine where she teaches anti-cancer pharmacology to the oncology fellows, medical students, and undergraduate students since early 1990s. In 2010, Dr. Wong joined Loma Linda University (LLU) and was appointed Professor of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science at the School of Pharmacy until March of 2013 when she joined Chapman University to assume her current position. During her tenure at LLU, Dr. Wong established an innovative oral chemotherapy management clinic at LLU Cancer Center in 2011 that integrates patient care and outcome research (*Figure 1*).

Dr. Siu-Fun Wong earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from the University of California,



**Figure 1** Siu-Fun Wong, PharmD, FASHP, FCSHP.

Los Angeles followed by Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Pharmacy. She completed a clinical residency at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Medical Center where she stayed to develop the oncology pharmacy program and the Infusion Center Pharmacy at the Chao Comprehensive Cancer Center delivering direct patient care and actively engaged in clinical research.

Dr. Wong's primary research interest is in supportive care in oncology where she conducts studies to optimize the management of adverse events experienced by the cancer patients with the intent to improve patient's quality-of-life. Her current research theme is in the management of papulopustular skin rash in cancer patients receiving epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) inhibitors. She recently completed a study to validate a patient self-reporting Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy (FACT-EGFR) nationally through SWOG cooperative group. The next phase of the study will be a randomized double-blind clinical study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of a topical cream in the treatment of the skin rash which also includes the translational research component to explore innovative method to obtain dermatologic

biospecimens. Dr. Wong also conducts outcomes research to seek for development of best practice model in cancer patient care and advocacy work to improve environmental health in the safe handling and disposal of oral chemotherapy. Dr. Wong brings her expertise in drug development, pharmacotherapy, and outcome research in cancer populations to collaborate with the SWOG investigators and at other inter-professional settings.

### A close look at oncological pharmacology

**GPM:** *What made you get into the field of pharmacology, particularly oncological pharmacology?*

**Dr. Wong:** My interest in oncology started in my experiential education year in pharmacy school where I had the opportunity to work with a progressive oncology pharmacist, the late Dr. Tom Bullips, who introduced me to the rewarding experiences in delivering direct oncology patient care and engaging in an inter-professional practice setting.

**GPM:** *What it's like to be an oncology pharmacist?*

**Dr. Wong:** The major roles of an oncology pharmacist are to make sure patients receive their chemotherapy in a safe and accurate manner, and to complement with the best supportive care possible to minimize the adverse effects caused by the chemotherapy therapy. My other role is to support the health care team to provide my expertise in clinical pharmacology to optimize patient care. Lastly, the opportunity to develop relationships with patients and their caregivers allows me the ability to contribute in making their life easier during this difficult time has been priceless.

**GPM:** *In your view, what are the oncology pharmacist opportunities in terms of oncology care?*

**Dr. Wong:** Because of the desperation in the early anti-cancer drug development period, many of the commonly used drugs continued to have incomplete pharmacologic profiles. This can raise challenges periodically in personalizing patient care because many answers cannot be directly located in drug information resources. This is where oncology pharmacist can be a valuable member of the health care team to connect basic science data to its clinical applications. In my own experiences, oncology pharmacist

should lead in the area of supportive care management of patients with cancer.

**GPM:** *What have been the most pivotal advance in terms of oncological pharmacology in the last decades? What are the challenges in this field?*

**Dr. Wong:** There is no question in my mind that the study of molecular science in oncology in the last 2 decades had led to many innovative advances in oncological pharmacology, as well as diagnostic medicine in oncology. Of course, the complexity and the intricate connections of all these biomarkers, compounded by the special technologic needs remind us the challenges of this field.

**GPM:** *To be specific in gynecologic oncology, what are the new drugs in the last decades and what are their roles in the treatment of gynecologic oncology? Also, what kind of new drugs we would expect?*

**Dr. Wong:** Incorporation of targeted therapy and the subsequent exploration of immunotherapy are exciting approaches in the management of gynecologic oncology. The re-discovery of the roles of intraperitoneal chemotherapy.

**GPM:** *You have established an innovative oral chemotherapy management clinic at LLU Cancer Center in 2011. Why you would like to establish such a clinic? What are its aims and visions?*

**Dr. Wong:** The use of oral anti-cancer chemotherapy has steadily increased in the past decade allowing patients to receive their treatment at the comfort of their own home. Of course, this also means a less supervised setting, leading to increased risk of under-reported adverse effects and environmental contaminations at home due to inappropriate handling and disposal of these medications. The purpose of the oral chemotherapy management clinic served to provide patients and/or caregivers with comprehensive education and medication management upon initiation of the oral therapy, proactive supportive care management, and sustain medication adherence. Because of the pilot nature of this clinic, I also collected outcome data on its clinical and financial effectiveness to support the critical role of an oncology pharmacist in this practice setting.

**GPM:** You also teach in universities. What is your teaching philosophy or principle as a professor?

**Dr. Wong:** My primary objective is to empower the learners to be resourceful and to apply critical thinking when delivering patient care. I encourage learners to think outside of the box in their own professional and personal development and be fearless yet be mindful of their limits.

**GPM:** Would you introduce us to some significant research projects/trials you were involved in?

**Dr. Wong:** In addition to my continual search for the “holy grail” in the management of papulopustular rash induced by the epidermal growth factor receptor inhibitors (EGFRI). I also actively engage learners to work with me on advocating improved health care delivery in the proper handling and disposal of oral chemotherapy. In addition to working with patients and caregivers in improving their knowledge/awareness and practice in the safe handling and disposal of their oral chemotherapy, we also work with governmental agencies and health care providers in creating best practice model and educational materials to enrich the resources in this area. Our team has been progressively achieving milestone accomplishments over the last few years, including influencing the state pharmacy board in policy implementation.

**GPM:** What are your future research directions?

**Dr. Wong:** There are still a lot of work needed in studying the management of EGFRI-induced rash. Furthermore, the study of molecular science using less invasive procedures in the skin model can be more optimally explored. Of course, my passion to improve environmental safety in the area of safe handling and disposal of oral chemotherapy will continue to capture my passion in improving population and environmental health.

### Being an author of the book Clinical Gynecologic Oncology

**GPM:** When did you hear this foremost textbook Clinical Gynecologic Oncology?

**Dr. Wong:** I had the privilege to work with the late Dr. DiSaia very early on in my career development, which is the connection for my involvement in the last 2 editions

of this text book.

**GPM:** We learned that you are an author of the 8th version of Clinical Gynecologic Oncology. Which chapter you involved? Could you briefly introduce your work in this book?

**Dr. Wong:** I was involved in the same Chapter 20 titled “Palliative Care and Quality of Life”. This chapter addresses many of the supportive care topics, my role is primarily focused on the pharmacologic information in this chapter.

**GPM:** What would you comment on this book series?

**Dr. Wong:** This specialized book series in gynecologic oncology is valid because of the gender significance in the patient populations and the surgical significance in the management of gynecologic cancers, which introduce some unique considerations in the patient care.

**GPM:** Is there any suggestion you would like to share with our readers while reading this book?

**Dr. Wong:** Appreciate the similarities and difference in the patient management plans so one may delivery the personalized care that these patients deserve.

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