

Legend in thoracic surgery: professor Anthony P. C. Yim

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As a living legend in thoracic surgery, Prof. Anthony P. C. Yim was put into the spotlight for many years. It can be imagined what a pleasant surprise it is to find Prof. Yim is also a talented artist (*Figure 1*). We are honored to launch the column “Art & Surgery” in *Journal of Visualized Surgery (JOVS)* to share with our readers the art in a surgeon’s eye.

I have had the pleasure to meet Prof. Yim in Hong Kong in March 2015 and in Seoul in December 2015 (*Figures 2,3*). In between the time meeting Prof. Yim, tremendous progress was witnessed in the academic development of thoracic surgery, notably the multitudinous conferences all around China, providing a kaleidoscopic outlook on the thoracic surgery. Simultaneously, we are glad to have the chance to get closer communication with Prof. Yim.

A gentleman with charm of humor and modesty was Prof. Yim’s impression on me when we first met in an interview. When I introduced him as a pioneer of the VATS surgery, Prof. Yim replied, “That means I am older and than most. I just did the surgery a few years before most people and I certainly don’t deserve it”.

When it came to the prospect on VATS, Prof. Yim was very optimistic, “It is very exciting. It represents progress of the technology. Change is constant and the pace of changing is getting faster and faster. The technology is improving all the time”. In retrospect, Prof. Yim depicted the time he started the conventional VATS. Back in 1990s, there is still some technology evolved like the camera and things like that but most people still talked about the technique about how to do it. But with the single port, people have shifted the focus not just on the technique but also on the technology. Now people are talking about the second and even third generation robots, which Prof. Yim believes in time is going to revolutionize surgery. One-day surgery, thoracic surgery in particular and surgery as a whole will be very different from what we know about it now.

In Prof. Yim’s opinion, the boundary between for example medicine, surgery and radiology is going to be very blurred. He believes there is going to be new system, which is an organ-specific discipline. The Endoluminal treatments have completely changed the way we now look at vascular surgery. Considering patients are always looking for treatment options that are less and less invasive or even not just minimally invasive but maybe even non-invasive, Prof. Yim indicated something like the super-dimension was going to be very important in thoracic surgery. “It is also very important that the young generation of thoracic surgeons should look into this because if they don’t, they may be like the cardiac surgeons that has given up their diagnostic modality and get reduced to just technicians. We are in a very exciting time seeing all these technologies evolving. Although they don’t have a crystal ball and can’t tell you what it is going to be like, one thing he is quite confident is thoracic surgery of the future is going to be very different than thoracic surgery we know today”, Prof. Yim added.

“To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly”—Henri-Louis Bergson (1907)

Prof. Yim once used the famous quotation from the French Nobel Laureate to address the philosophy of biology and metaphysics at the turn of this century. He believed it is equally applicable today to the field of cardiothoracic surgery as the specialty is in a rapid flux of evolution and the practice in the next decade may well be very different from that we were trained for. It seems he is right with today’s trend.

Always keep an open eye

Prof. Yim also gave his piece of advice to the young



Figure 1 The first oil painting (oil on canvas, 12"×16") of Prof. Anthony P. C. Yim completed in his teenage. "Painting is a form of self-expression. As I have not had any formal training in art, still life was an easy way to start. This painting was done during my visit to my sister at Ann Arbor, Michigan and I just used what were available as my art subjects"—Prof. Anthony P. C. Yim.



Figure 2 Prof. Yim and the editor met in 3rd Asian Single Port VATS Symposium & Live Surgery.



Figure 3 Prof. Diego Gonzalez-Rivas, Prof. Rodney Landreneau and Prof. Yim cheered for the launch of the book on Uniportal VATS in the 2nd Asia Thoracoscopic Surgery Education Program (ATEP). Prof. Alan Sihoe, The Editor-in-Chief of the book, has worked with and learned from Prof. Yim.

surgeons: always keep an open eye. Don't reject a new idea right away just because it sounds ridiculous. When Prof. Yim was starting VATS lobectomy, he was criticized left and right by conventional surgeons because it was not safe or oncologically sound. Nevertheless, the critics are now doing VATS surgery so to Prof. Yim that is an accomplishment on its own. We should always watch out for new technology. Prof. Yim believes interventional bronchoscopy and super-dimension technology is going to be increasingly important. We have got into an era of rapidly evolving technology, not just technique but really technology.

"If I were resident now, I would learn from the interventional radiologists. Try to master some of the skills because a lot of treatment is now catheter-based", Prof. Yim smiled.

About Prof. Yim

Professor Yim used to be an active member of many learned societies which include Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Edinburgh and Glasgow, Fellows of the American College of Surgeons and International College of Surgeons, Member of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery (among the few Asians for this honor), the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, American Thoracic Society, American College of Chest Physicians, European Association for Cardio-thoracic Surgery, the New York Academy of Sciences and the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine.

Professor Yim has written widely on several aspects of cardiothoracic surgery. He is the lead editor of the book *Minimal Access Cardiothoracic Surgery*, to be published by W.B. Saunders in September 1999. He has also edited several monographs and contributed to over 150 peer-reviewed articles. He currently serves on eight editorial boards of regional or international medical journals including the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery* and *CHEST*. He is the recipient of numerous grants supporting his research interests in lung cancer and cardiac surgery.

Professor Yim served as Secretary-General and Editor-in-Chief to the Society of Endoscopic and Laparoscopic Surgeons of Asia from 1996–1999, and council member to several international societies, including International Federation Societies of Endoscopic Surgery (IFSES), International Society for Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery (ISMICS) and MITSIG. He is visiting professor to several institutions in China and is on the Advisory

Committee of the Annual Chinese National Symposium on Thoracoscopic Surgery. He launched a Training Program in 1994 which enables thoracic surgeons from China to receive training at the Prince of Wales Hospital.

Professor Yim was married to Esther Kiu Shan Yu in December 1998. His hobbies include reading, swimming, squash and painting.

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Footnote

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