

Obituaries

We welcome original tributes of less than 500 words; we may edit them for clarity and length. Obituaries may be emailed to journal@doctorsofbc.ca. Include birth and death dates, full name and name deceased was best known by, key hospital and professional affiliations, relevant biographical data, and a high-resolution head-and-shoulders photo.



Dr Madeline Huang Chung *1925–2021*

Dr Madeline Huang Chung was born in Shanghai, China, on 3 July 1925. She passed away in her sleep on 22 August 2021 after facing dementia with grace and dignity for many years. She lived a full and eventful life as a loving, dedicated family member, wife, mother, and grandmother, as well as a trail-blazing female physician.

Dr Chung graduated from Xiangya (Yale-China) Medical School in Changsha, Hunan Province, in 1948 at the age of 23. She would joke that she was probably the only doctor in Canada who never completed high school as her education was interrupted by World War II. She came to North America to finish her studies due to the ongoing civil war in China, with the goal of returning to China as a medical missionary once finished. The China Immigration Act had just been repealed in 1947, which had allowed her to come. After two internships, the first in Tacoma and the second in Victoria, she went to Montreal for the first year of her residency in obstetrics and gynecology. There she met her future husband, Dr Wallace Chung, who was in his first year of medical school at the time. The couple married on 7 June 1953 and moved to Vancouver. There she started a solo practice at Vancouver General Hospital and the old Grace Hospital.

Because of her sex and her ethnicity, she faced significant discrimination from staff and faculty, as well as the community. She was denied a loan to start her office because the bank was concerned that she would quit work and stay home once she had children. Despite the opposition, her practice thrived. Newly arrived Chinese-speaking immigrants and women of all ethnicities who wished to have a female obstetrician found her. Despite initially being denied an academic appointment, she was also popular among medical students and residents due to her enthusiasm for teaching.

Over a long career starting in 1956, until her retirement in 1992, she delivered 7226 babies. They were all carefully documented in her obstetrical appointment books. She delivered babies whose parents she had also delivered; all were members of the unofficial club of the Chung Babies. She retired as a clinical professor emeritus.

Dr Chung's parents were Yoong Yih Wong and Alice Wong. Madeline was the firstborn and eldest of three girls. Her father was very advanced in his thinking for the time and believed that his girls' education should not be any different than that of any boy's.

Dr Chung had a relatively privileged life initially, as the daughter of a government official, but her teenage years were extremely fraught. She spent World War II as a refugee in the countryside around Hong Kong after the city fell to the Japanese army. As a young teen, she was the one who had to forage for food and seek shelter for her injured mother and younger siblings. Her desire to help others in need was heightened by her deep Christian faith as well as the suffering she had encountered. On one occasion, she brought home a patient for Christmas dinner. The young woman, a newly arrived immigrant, had just been diagnosed with cancer and had no family or friends locally. Dr

Chung took her under her wing until family could arrange to come over to care for her. On another occasion, a Chinese refugee family was welcomed to live in her family home until they could get on their feet.

She also volunteered her time in the community. She was very active in the Chinese United Church and served as a board member and chair. She was one of the co-founders of the Chinese Language True Light School, which exists to this day. She was not amused at being audited twice in 1 week by the Canada Revenue Agency (fruitlessly both times) as they could not believe that someone could do all that work for free. For her dedication she was given an honorary life membership in the Canadian Medical Association in 1993 and she received a Civic Merit Award from the City of Vancouver in 2013. She was always extremely humble and never sought recognition as long as she could continue doing what she loved.

Postretirement, she most enjoyed being Gumma to her five grandchildren, traveling extensively with her husband, growing huge azaleas in her garden, and continuing her volunteer work. She traveled to China with the Evangelical Medical Aid Society, where she fulfilled her life's dream to do medical missions, teaching, and delivering babies.

A heartfelt thanks to her wonderful family doctor, Dr Cindy Chang, who was always there when needed, and her devoted caregivers, Reyna and Shirley, without whom we would not have been able to fulfill mom's wish to remain at home.

To hear Dr Chung in her own words, listen to a recording done for the Chinese Canadian Women Project of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario: <https://mhso.ca/chinese-canadianwomen/en/database.php?c=43>.

—**Maria Chung, MD**
Vancouver