



DOCTOR OFF DUTY

As an experienced oncologist and a skilled violinist, Dr. Paul Cheng sits down with *THE PEAK* to talk about his off-duty interests and his ways of maintaining work-life balance.

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"What do you want to know about me?" Dr. Paul Cheng casually asks as he sits down for the interview. In the medical field, he is commonly known as an experienced oncologist and haematologist. People might be more familiar with his academic expertise and achievements, but Dr Cheng is in fact a man of many talents.

As we arrived at his apartment in Mid-Levels, he had just finished cooking the Galinha à Portuguesa (commonly known as Portuguese-style chicken). Last time we met, he roasted the perfect rack of lamb, which he especially ordered from France. And the next day after work, he will be at the pool swimming laps, just like every Wednesday morning.

Despite being an author of over 30 patents in biotechnology, as well as the founder and director of a Hong Kong-based drug development company, specialising in the treatment research of many human malignancies, Dr. Cheng always keeps himself occupied with his interests. His recent favorite certainly goes to playing the violin. (As a side note, his violin is made by Giuseppe Rocca, a famous Italian violin maker of the 19th century.) Once a week, he would have a two-hour violin rehearsal session with Rod, a pianist. He also cycles and reads every day. Not to mention he used to spend his downtime doing oil paintings.

"When I was small, I was mesmerized by the sound of a violin. I thought it was the most beautiful sound I have ever heard in my life. That's why I begged my parents to let me play. Back then, playing the musical instruments was a big deal. I had to ask them many times before they said yes," he recalls. He played until he went to Wales to study for college. When he returned to Hong Kong to practice professionally, he met a few friends who wanted to form a quartet; he then picked up the violin again.

"I used to play in the Hong Kong Medical Association Orchestra, and I have participated in various fundraising concerts. But as time goes by, my fingers have grown quite stiff and my eyesight is not as bright. It's quite challenging to play in an orchestra. Therefore I now prefer to play by myself," he says. Although he only plays for pleasure now, he still takes it very seriously. "I spoke to Johnny Poon,



the head of the music department in Baptist University, that I want to practice the violin with a pianist partner. Then he introduced me to Rod, who now comes to my place once a week to rehearse with me. Together we play many amazing pieces by Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, and some other great composers." He shrugs, "This is my way of taking a break from the hectic life. Some doctors work long hours every day, but I try to avoid that. I want to have a life. Therefore I try my best to maintain a better work-life balance."

When enjoying the mini-concert performed by Dr Cheng and Rod, suddenly one thought strikes me. Work-life balance is the kind of lifestyle that many would have wished for but deemed impossible to pursue. Dr Cheng's pursuit of his many interests outside of his remarkable career achievements and his determination to maintain an active and fruitful life outside of work has proven that a well-balanced life is not just a myth. Perhaps we could all learn from Dr Cheng's mentality and bring back a sense of control into our lives. After all, work-life balance should not be a luxury to all - life is too short to be filled only with work, right? 🎻

