

One Stop Health Care

by Georgia de Graaff

Finding a family doctor is at the top of the “to do” list for any expat, along with deciding where to live and choosing a school for the kids. Many of us succumb to fevers and mycoplasma soon after arriving here, which makes finding the right GP and specialist a priority.

There are some great options when it comes to healthcare delivery in Singapore. The city boasts a variety of medical centres that attract top practitioners and ensconce them in fabulous locations, while taking a holistic approach toward services that heal and maintain both body and mind.

Anyone visiting Body with Soul at Rochester Park, for example, could easily mistake the medical centre for a spa. The beautiful black-and-white buildings, originally private residences, stood empty until expat doctor Kim Hayes realised that, gutted and refurbished, they would be the perfect site for

creating the kind of medical centre she had dreamt about.

Body with Soul has been open for one year and incorporates a GP clinic, a variety of practitioners including podiatrists, acupuncturists, psychologists and a sports physician, a glass-walled function room to host talks, a beautiful al fresco café that serves fresh, healthy food and teas, and even has onsite gardening classes for children.

Then there is the architecturally modern Camden Medical Centre, which people visit for the restaurant, Whitebait and Kale, as much as for its 150 practitioners. This one-stop health shop has a discreet, stylish environment, its own shuttle-bus and a fab location near Orchard Road. Clients travel from all over the region to avail themselves of the services on offer, from a Pilates studio and top cosmetic surgeons to medical and dental practices.

Just who are the people working hard behind the scenes to help make these medical destinations what they are?

Meet expats Kim Hayes, founder and principal doctor of Body with Soul at Rochester Park, and Michael Macer, a GP with the International Medical Clinic at Camden Medical Centre.



Have you always been interested in health?

Kim: When I was four, I told my grandmother that I wanted to be a doctor when I grew up and was unwavering in this dream. I've always believed it to be best job in the world. I help to relieve pain and smooth over problems, and follow families through their lives and experiences. It is both humbling and wonderful.

Michael: I wanted to be an architect, but was unable to get into architectural drawing class in the ninth grade. I had to revise my future plans. Professional sports seemed unlikely so I chose medicine as my third option. As it turned, out medicine was indeed my calling.

Besides Singapore, where have you practised?

Michael: I worked for eleven years in Minnesota and have done some volunteer medical work in Haiti and Cuba.

Kim: In the UK and Australia, including working with communities in small towns.

Why did you come to Singapore?

Kim: I came here in 1997 to be with my now-husband. I was lucky to find some great doctors to work with on my initial visit just before taking the plunge. And after having children, I found Singapore is an easy place to settle in.

Michael: My wife was offered a position here with her employer and we decided to make the big move as a new adventure. Fortunately, my profession is rather portable and I was able to continue working here.

How is Singapore different from other places where you worked?

Michael: I have not had to take care of patients with hypothermia or frostbite, but have quickly learned about dengue, chikungunya and malaria. Apart from some different names and the availability of certain medications, most things are the same, as human bodies function the same way around the world.

Kim: There is much less geriatric work than in Australia or the UK. Also, there is an enormous value around preventative health here. More people see a doctor

when they are well, to keep a healthy mind and body. It is always good to help someone through an illness but I really love to keep people in their optimal health.

How do you view healthcare in Singapore?

Kim: It is incredible. There are top rate doctors in every field, cutting-edge, accessible equipment and none of the delays in treatment that can occur in other countries.

Michael: It's excellent, with easy access to specialists, procedures and current technology.

Are your clients expats or locals?

Michael: Our clients are nearly all expats, married to expats or work for expats. We see a fair number of visitors to Singapore as well.

Kim: Our medical clinic clients are predominantly expats – as are the doctors!

How has being an expat yourself affected how you see your clients?

Kim: Being an expat married to a local, with expat and local friends, benefits my children and patients, as I have a real understanding of both cultures. I feel that I know what people are searching for in the pursuit of good healthcare, and Body with Soul reflects that. People love the welcoming and peaceful environment and the fact that the practitioners are chosen not just for their skills but for their personal attributes.

Michael: As an expat, I am better able to help patients navigate their way through an unfamiliar system. Plus, it is always nice to share stories as we have a common bond, living abroad. It leads to some funny situations as well. I wasn't too familiar with some British terms, such as the difference between being "unwell" and being "sick". When one woman told me she had been unwell for a fortnight, I asked her again how long she had been sick. She replied, "I haven't been sick at all." Then I was really confused. I now know that some say "sick" to refer to vomiting only, and that a fortnight is two weeks.

What is a doctor's most important skill?

Michael: The ability to listen.

Kim: First, to really listen and next, to know your limitations. 📞

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