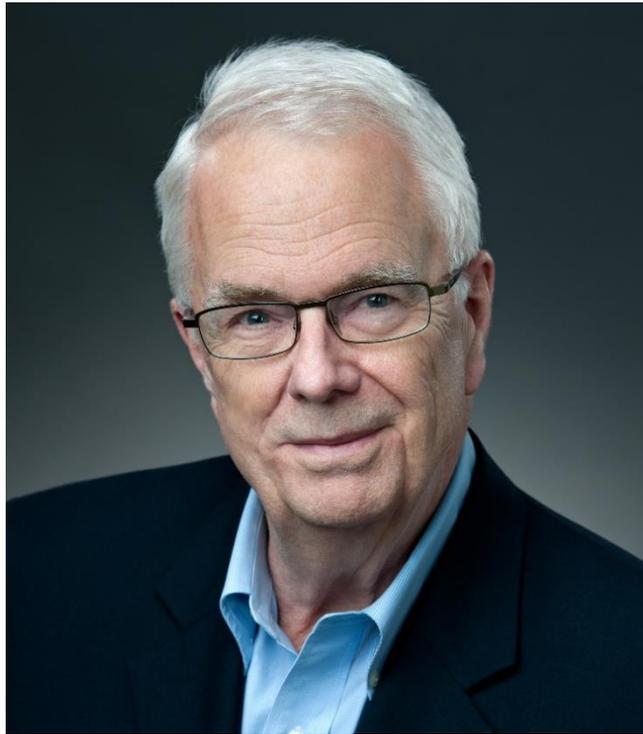# Start with the End in Mind

The Academic Medicine Research Institute (AMRI) is a one-stop research enabler in the SingHealth Duke-NUS Academic Medical Centre (AMC) that provides administration and scientific technical support to the research community. This September, AMRI celebrates her 10th anniversary. How did the concept of AMRI come about? In an interview with Prof Augustus John Rush, one of the founding members of AMRI, he outlined the initial vision for AMRI, and shared pearls of wisdom to aspiring clinician researchers in the AMC.

In the Beginning

Originally known as the Clinical & Translational Research Institute (CTRI) under Office of Clinical Sciences, AMRI was initially modelled after a multidisciplinary strategy that had been successful at UT Southwestern Medical Center. Supported by the Clinical Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the team at UT Southwestern sought to develop clinicians into clinical research collaborators, and/or clinical research grant-acquiring clinician scientists. Using statistical analysis, they created a mentoring-based educational career tracker for the clinicians and held seminars for cross-discipline interaction amongst medical, surgical, and scientific disciplines such as statistics and big data.

Applying this model at CTRI, Prof Rush saw the need to develop materials that were accessible to large numbers of clinicians who were interested in taking on a research career,

while simultaneously taking advantage of the expertise on site. Training modules were developed in-house to help clinicians better understand how to conceptualise a research study and how to execute a clinically relevant research, which are now a certificate course in Duke-NUS Medical School. He also saw the need to develop a career pathway that nurtures aspiring clinician scientists without compromising on their clinical career development when compared to peers who had chosen to pursue full-time clinical work. He also recognised the need to support aspiring researchers to obtain pilot data to increase their grant competitiveness, which led to the launch of Khoo Scholars Programme (KSP).

Breaking Barriers

However, little is known about supporting an alternative career pathway that marries both clinical and research work at that time. A tremendous amount of effort was, as such, poured into shifting perspectives and working around the schedules of busy clinicians through lunchtime meetings, regardless of how early or how late in the day it was. In addition, each aspiring clinician was paired with a statistician who would provide support to developing ideas, and the latter would become part of the clinician investigators' research team as the ideas were further developed and submitted for peer review.

Start with the End in Mind

The choice to take on a Research path is no doubt a roller coaster ride – from the initial months of ideation to feedback to grant submission, the many months of hard work to prepare for a grant application could amount to nothing. But there is a certain tenacity required for this kind of work. On a daily basis, it is often far more rewarding to personally treat patients who are ill and see them get well. However, the opportunities to change how we practice medicine, to change how we understand disease prognosis or to develop therapeutics, are chances to make larger contributions to a wider audience. The key is to first define where you're going – "**If you don't know where you're going, you will not know when you get there**."

About Prof Augustus John Rush

An internationally renowned psychiatrist, Prof Augustus John Rush is a Professor Emeritus in Duke-NUS Medical School and Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences at Duke University School of Medicine. Prof Rush established the AMRI in 2012 and served as its inaugural Executive Director.

We are immensely honoured to have the privilege to share his vision and to recognise his contributions to AMRI.