



譚詠詩醫生

Dr. Theresa Tam

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如果不是三年前開始的全球新冠疫情，譚詠詩（Theresa Wing Sze Tam）的名字也許不會像現在這樣家喻戶曉。不過譚詠詩自己也從未想過有一天她會成為一個萬眾矚目之人。“我開始學醫的時候，從沒想過要成為首席衛生官或是一個頻頻和總理及內閣部長們打交道的人，”她說：“我只是當機會降臨時，就擁抱了它。”

少年志趣

譚詠詩生於香港，她的父母和很多親戚都是教師。10歲時她隨父母遷居英國。在英格蘭東部林肯郡的格蘭特姆鎮長大的她，仍帶著酷酷的英式口音。她很小就對科學表現出濃厚興趣。那個年代，在她就讀的劍橋郡彼得伯羅鎮的寄宿學校，很少有女孩子會考慮把科學作為未來的職業方向，但譚詠詩很幸運，她的老師們給予她很多鼓勵和啟發，為她奠定了堅實基礎。

生物和化學是譚詠詩最喜歡的科目，她也熱愛古典音樂，會演奏鋼琴、小號、和小提琴等多種樂器，還在讀高中時就拿到了倫敦音樂學院的鋼琴演奏級證書。在她看來，藝術和科學是相通的。不過她最後還是選擇了醫學。她說：「如果我成為科學家，還可以在業餘時間享受音樂，但反過來的話，就沒機會在科學領域發展了。」如今雖然工作極其繁忙，譚詠詩仍沒

有放棄自己的音樂愛好，她還新學了錫哨笛和大提琴兩種樂器。譚詠詩也喜愛運動，雖然在學校的時候她在體育方面沒有特別突出的表現，但她一直堅持運動健身，迄今已跑過數次全程和半程馬拉松。

從兒科醫生到傳染病專家

從諾丁漢大學醫學院畢業後，譚詠詩又隨同家人移民到加拿大。海外獲得的醫學學歷在加拿大很難得到認可，需要經過許多額外繁複的考試和認證。但對一心要從醫的譚詠詩而言，任何困難都無法阻擋她。她很快得到了在艾伯塔大學做兒科住院醫師的機會，後來又到卑詩大學任兒科傳染病研究員。

1996年譚詠詩成為加拿大皇家內科醫生和外科醫生協會的會員，迄今為止發表了55篇同行審議的論文。在譚詠詩看來，從醫是一種最直接的服務社會和幫助他人的方式。作為兒科醫生，看到孩童一康復就立刻恢復生龍活虎的狀態特別令人開心。不過，臨床治療一次只能幫助一名患者，想要幫助和保護更多人免於病痛，是她轉向傳染病防治與應急管理和公眾保健的主要原因。

在公共衛生管理領域嶄露頭角

1997年譚詠詩進入加拿大衛生部，擔任“應用流行病專員”。25年來，從非典到H1N1流感以及伊波拉病毒，每一次

重大疫情的應對，她作為資深醫學專家或高級管理人員都起到了重要作用。她帶領團隊完成了加拿大第一份跨所有省區的流感疫情應對指導文件——《加拿大衛生部門大流行流感應對計劃》。她在改善傳染病監測、加強免疫計劃、提升衛生應急管理以及加強實驗室生物安全和生物保全等方面作出諸多貢獻。她還作為世界衛生組織的國際專家參與了非典和流感疫情危機應對等全球項目，並且作為國際阻止脊髓灰質炎傳播項目專家組中的第一位非美國籍專家參與了在孟加拉國的消除脊髓灰質炎項目。

紮實的學術基礎、豐富的實踐經驗以及高度的敬業精神讓譚詠詩在衛生部以及2004年為應對非典危機而成立的加拿大公共衛生局脫穎而出。正如譚詠詩所言，她以往的所有工作和努力，“就像一塊塊積木一樣，奠定了如今所擔任職務的基礎”。她先後被提升為傳染性疾病防控助理部長和副首席衛生官，2017年被任命為首席衛生官，成為首位擔任此職位的華裔和女性，2022年她再獲任命，繼續連任。

聚光燈下的優異表現

2020年爆發的新冠全球大流行給全世界帶來前所未有的挑戰，身處抗擊疫情前線的譚詠詩一夜間成為加拿大人最關注的人物。全國封城期間，譚詠詩差不多每天都在電視上對民眾講話，通報疫情和病毒研究的最新信息。她也要隨時向特魯多總理及其內閣提供信息以供他們做決策時參考。在公眾看不見的

地方，她的主要任務是協調各省和地區的疫情防控工作。

譚詠詩說，與民眾和政府領導人的溝通工作類似於“翻譯”：她要把複雜的醫學專業知識“翻譯”成簡單清楚的信息給大眾，幫助他們做好自我防護，或者“翻譯”成便於政府決策者理解的內容，以便他們做出社會和經濟決策。最大的挑戰在於醫學界最初對病毒的了解非常有限，一切充滿未知數和不確定性，並且隨時在變化中。

與民眾溝通時她秉承的宗旨首先是保持透明度，無論是當前所知信息有限還是此前信息有誤，她都對民眾坦誠相告，同時承諾有新信息時會及時更新，發現錯誤則及時更正。其次她深知對於高層決策者而言，很多時候是在不同選項中進行艱難抉擇，各選項的優劣並非黑白分明，甚至僅有微妙差別，但民眾難以看到決策背後的複雜過程，他們往往只關注決策的內容和作用，所以譚詠詩以幫助民眾理解不斷更新的科學證據為己任，恪守專業和科學的立場。

譚詠詩冷靜誠懇的個人風格和專業素養為她“吸粉”無數，社交媒體上“#謝謝妳譚醫生”和“#我支持譚醫生”一度成為流行話題。但如同所有公眾人物一樣，她也不可避免地遭到無端攻擊。疫情相關話題常常被政治化，而譚詠詩則成為對執政黨不滿的異見者的攻擊目標。一些反對派抓住細枝末節大做文章，攻擊譚詠詩的立場甚至她的專業資質。對此譚詠詩的態度很淡然，她在接受媒體採訪時說：“我唯一關注的是和我的同事們一起把這波疫情控制住……我不會讓其他噪音分散我的注意力。”

這一方面是譚詠詩的個性使然，她坦言自己屬於“內向型”，“通常更關注自己能怎樣做得更好，而不是去和別人競爭”。另一方面緣於譚詠詩的自信和底氣。她的專業知識和經驗不是非專業人員的攻擊抹殺得了的，加拿大的抗疫成績更是有目共睹：和其他西方國家特別是相鄰的美國相比，加拿大每10萬人中的感染人數和新冠死亡率等硬數據方面的表現都非常優異，疫苗接種率更是遙遙領先。這些成績後面，譚詠詩功不可沒。

鼓勵後輩打破壁壘 超越自我

很多人將譚詠詩視為“華人之光”，她本人對於接受紛至沓來的榮譽非常謹慎，但她很高興自己能給年輕人樹立一個成功榜樣。她猶記得剛上任時，一位在公共部門工作的少數族裔同僚對她說：“看到妳擔任這個職位，我彷彿看到了希望，覺得自己也能有做到頂尖職位的一天。”

加拿大有許多華裔在醫療行業工作，但在公共衛生管理和醫療行業標準制定機構中卻鮮有華人面孔。譚詠詩認為，一個國家的醫療體系也應該體現它所服務的民眾的族裔結構，所以她鼓勵有志影響加拿大公共衛生決策和改善加拿大衛生體系的華裔年輕人多關注公共衛生領域，不要在內心給自己設限，當機會來臨時，積極擁抱它。她說，獲得成功的關鍵是“打破壁壘，包括外部和內心的壁壘，要相信自己能夠做到。”



新冠疫情新聞發布會
COVID-19 Press Conference



2022年國際艾滋病大會加拿大展臺
Canada Pavillion Aids 2022



2022年國際艾滋病大會HIV自測
2022 International AIDS Conference
self-testing



與青年小組合影
Youth Panel



與雜技表演者合影
With Acrobats



世衛組織第三次「言出必行 人人健康挑戰」活動
WHO 3rd annual Walk the Talk Health for All Challenge



首劑新冠疫苗
First Covid Vaccination



第75屆世界衛生大會
75th World Health Assembly



環境周期間划皮划艇
Kayaking during Environmental Day



練習瑜伽
Yoga pose



慶祝中國新年
Celebrating Chinese New Year

騎行運動
Biking



與David Saint-Jacques合影
With David Saint-Jacques



譚詠詩少時
Young Theresa



Breaking Down Barriers - Embracing Opportunities —Theresa Tam

If it wasn't for the pandemic that started almost three years ago, Theresa Tam might not have become a household name. Theresa herself never expected to be in the spotlight. "When I started medical school, I never thought I would become the Chief Public Health Officer and interact frequently with the prime minister or cabinet members." Theresa said, "I just embraced the opportunity when it arrived."

Childhood Interests

Theresa Wing Sze Tam was born in Hong Kong where her parents and many relatives were teachers. She moved to Grantham, Lincolnshire, England at the age of ten and speaks with a blended and cool English accent. She has been interested in science from a young age, at a time when very few girls at her boarding school in Peterborough (Cambridgeshire) pursued science as a career. Luckily Theresa was encouraged and supported by her teachers, helping her build a solid foundation.

While biology and chemistry were Theresa's favourite subjects, she also loved classical music, and learned to play the piano, trumpet and violin, receiving the Associate of the London College of Music in pianoforte

performance diploma while in high school. She had equal passion for art and science, although in the end she chose medicine. She reasoned, “If I became a scientist I could still enjoy music in my leisure. But conversely I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to pursue science.” Today, despite being very busy with work, Theresa has not abandoned her love for music and picked up the cello and tin whistle along the way. While she did not excel in sports at school, she has since completed a number of half and full marathons.

From Pediatrician to Infectious Disease Specialist

After graduating from medical school at the University of Nottingham, Theresa immigrated to Canada with her parents and siblings. Foreign medical training is not easily recognized in Canada, requiring additional examinations and certification. However, with focused determination she quickly obtained a residency position in pediatrics at the University of Alberta, and later a pediatric infectious disease fellowship at the University of British Columbia.

Theresa became a member of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1996. To date she has published 55 peer reviewed papers. Theresa sees being a doctor as the most direct way to service society and help others. As a pediatrician, she finds joy in seeing a sick child recover and regain their youthful vitality. But bedside medicine only reaches one patient at a time. To help more people and to protect them from disease was a main reason Theresa switched to

public health where the population is her patient, with a focus on health emergency management, disease prevention and health promotion.

Excelling in Public Health Management

Theresa joined Health Canada in 1997 as a field epidemiologist. In twenty-five years, from SARS to H1N1 and Ebola, she has made significant contributions as a medical specialist or a senior manager. She led a team to complete Canada's first published pandemic response plan--Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Planning Guidance for the Health Sector (CPIP). She played a key role in improving infectious disease monitoring, enhancing immunization programs, improving health emergency management and strengthening laboratory biosafety and biosecurity. She was one of the World Health Organization's international experts in SARS and other pandemic response committees. She was the first non-US member of the Stop Transmission of Polio team and supported polio eradication activities in Bangladesh.

A solid education, rich work experience and exemplary professionalism combine to make Theresa stand out at Health Canada, and later at the Public Health Agency of Canada, after the agency was created in 2004 in response to the SARS crisis. As she puts it, all her experiences "are the building blocks towards the job (she is) doing now." Theresa was Assistant Deputy Minister for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, then Deputy Chief Public Health Officer before she was

appointed Canada's Chief Public Health Officer in 2017, becoming the first woman, and first Chinese Canadian to hold that position. She was re-appointed in 2022.

Excellence in the Spotlight

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to the world, thrusting Theresa, as Chief Public Health Officer, into the limelight overnight. During the nation-wide lockdown, Theresa spoke to Canadians almost daily on television, sharing updates on the pandemic and the latest research on COVID-19. She kept Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet abreast of all developments to support their decision-making process. Out of the public eye, her main responsibility was to coordinate and collaborate on the management of the pandemic with all provinces and territories.

Theresa shared that communicating with political leaders and citizens involves interpretation - translating complex technical medical information into easy-to-understand everyday language so that people can best protect themselves and their families. Translating complex information also helped her advise decision makers in government so that they could develop social and economic strategies. At first, the biggest challenge was the medical profession had very limited understanding about the virus, amid much uncertainty, with information changing rapidly.

Theresa's top principle in communicating with the public is transparency. Whether there is only limited information, or whether previously communicated information is no longer accurate, she has been honest and has always strived to provide updates of new information or corrections on old information as soon as it's available. She appreciates that senior policy makers often have to weigh difficult choices when the options are not always clearly black and white, or even that distinct from each other. The public don't always see all the logistics and complexities, as they are mainly concerned about the specifics of the policies and their impact. Theresa sees her role as helping people understand the evidence as it evolves, making recommendations always from the perspective of scientific knowledge.

Theresa's calm, sincere approach has earned her countless "fans", social media hashtags like #ThankYouDrTam and #IstandWithDrTam were trending for some time. But like all public figures, she did not escape criticism. Pandemic conversations were often politicized, and Theresa became the target of critics of the government. Some opposition critics picked on granular details, at times aiming for Theresa's position and even her professional qualifications. Her matter-of-fact response to the media was "My singular focus is to work with all of my colleagues to get this pandemic wave under control...I don't let noise detract me from doing that."

This partly reflects Theresa's personality. "I am an introvert, I am a very internally-focused person, very self-driven, I tend to focus on how I can do better personally; I don't compete with other people". It also reflects

Theresa's confidence in her training and experience. Canada's track record in combating the pandemic is proof in the pudding - especially compared to other western countries such as the USA. Canada's infection rate per 100,000 population, mortality rate and vaccination rate are far lower than other similar countries. We could not have achieved any of these without Theresa Tam.

Encouraging Younger Generations to Break Down Barriers and Achieve More

Many people see Theresa as a "Chinese Beacon". She herself cautiously acknowledges all the recognition and is happy that she can be a role model for younger people. She recalls when she first became Chief Public Health Officer, a visible minority colleague in the public service had said to her, "It's really helpful to see you in this position because then I thought I could actually get there".

There are many Chinese Canadians in the healthcare field, but few in health policy or clinical standards committees. Theresa feels that a country's health system should reflect the ethnicities of the population it serves. That is why she encourages young Chinese Canadians interested in public health and health policy to embrace opportunities as they arise, and not self-limit their aspirations. She says the key to success is to "break down barriers including external and internal barriers and believe that you can do it."