



## THE PYRAMID OF SCIENCE-BASED SOCIAL IMPACT

After his A-levels, Denis enrolled in the Physics Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He chose physics instead of the technology-related subject of engineering, because in talks by renowned scientists which he attended from time to time in Form Seven, he realised that all technologies are ultimately based on basic science, that is, physics.

**“This formed a pyramid, with science at the bottom. Applied science — or technology — is on top of that. Then, on top of applied science is technological products, while at the tip is influence, or social influence.”**

The closer you get to the bottom, the bigger the pyramid you can draw. With this in mind, Denis became eager to

pursue the fundamental knowledge that would allow him to make a greater impact in the future.

With this attitude, he completed a Master’s Degree in Physics at CUHK and a Master’s Degree in Medical Robotics and Image-Guided Intervention at Imperial College London, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Oxford. In the next six months, he aims to launch the cue light and continue to improve the mechanical stabilising glove to bring convenience and comfort to the lives of Parkinson’s patients.

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# WHEN

# PASSION

# BECOMES

# A MEDPOT - SUE HO WEAPON



## RETURNING FROM THE UK AND MISSING ITS HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

After graduating from the UK, Sue worked as a pharmacist in the geriatric department of a local hospital. Pharmacies were separate from doctor consultation services, meaning that there were pharmacies and family doctors in each community. When patients were discharged from hospital, they could pick up their medication from the community pharmacy at regular intervals. Sue's role was to inform the community pharmacy of any changes that the hospital wanted to make. "The local system was very comprehensive; the medication was even divided into doses." The community was closely linked to the hospital, but Sue still saw many seniors admitted to hospital for taking the wrong medication. When she returned to Hong Kong, she found that the local healthcare system was even more limited.

**"When I came back, I found that the whole system was completely different from the UK one. There were no community pharmacies. What could I do to help the elderly? Apart from an ordinary pill box, can we do anything to remind them to take their medication?"**

Sue said.

MedPOT is designed to cater for the elderly's need to take medication on a schedule. Apart from reminders and instructions on how to take the medication, there is also an app connected to family members and familiar medical institutions — when the pillbox has not been opened for a while, they will be notified. "The whole idea was not only to address the practical needs of the elderly, but also to raise awareness in the community — how can we use more effective methods to help the elderly?"

## PHARMACIST AS EXHIBITION “HELPER”

Having noticed this social problem, Sue wished to make a change, but reality did not go as planned. Sue was unemployed for almost a year after she came back to Hong Kong. “I kept failing one of the exams, so I tried to work all kinds of jobs that year, including the position of exhibition receptionist. People who interviewed me said, ‘Ms Ho, you are overqualified — this is not funny’. I tried everything, but I never heard back.”

Sue’s path seemed to be full of thorns and she could not see the way forward, but the people and events along the way seemed to be preparing Sue for her dream. During her year of unemployment, a friend from Mainland China invited her to Mainland China to share her experience of working in the UK, and she also attended a charity talk where she heard a representative from a social enterprise talk about “upcycling” burlap bags. These experiences gave Sue a deeper understanding of her profession, broadened her imagination, and pushed her to put into practice the ideas she had already developed.

“After listening to different people, I was fired up. Seeing how many resources are wasted in society, I felt that this must be done.”

Sue said with passion and conviction in her eyes.



“The interview with Sue was a race against time. The mocha on the table had cooled down by the time she hurried into the room and apologised profusely. After about 30 minutes, looking sorry, she said that she had to leave for an important meeting. Even though the meeting was brief, one could feel her enthusiasm for the development of “MedPOT”.

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## DIFFERENT ASPIRATIONS LEAVING ONLY TWO IN THE TEAM

Sue took the idea of MedPOT to Good Seed and shared about the project with different people at various workshops. Eventually, she met seven teammates. Sue said that she was not a leader by nature, but she had the strongest passion out of all of them and she was committed to everything she did. However, reality is often not as good one might imagine. “It gets hard when you actually start doing it, and you see team members who joined for fun leaving the team one by one,” Sue said lightly. After regular meetings and working according to a schedule, Sue has learnt to be understanding when her teammates do not make it on time.

The team members came from different backgrounds and had different visions and expectations of the project. Sue’s original intention was to help the elderly and raise public awareness, and whether the product would make money was not her primary concern. This idea may have fallen short of the expectations of some team members. “The whole process was a bit like speed dating, where people came together quickly but didn’t stay together for long. Some of the team members realised that we couldn’t split the money when the revenue came in, so they left because of different priorities,” Sue laughed.

**“I like to finish what I set out to do, and I don’t like overstatements. If some people say, ‘Sure, sure,’ but they don’t do as they say, I will get mad at them. Afterwards, I start to wonder if their passion has worn off.”**

## AFTER DOUBT, FAITH NEVER DIES

Sue remained optimistic in the face of her teammates’ lack of enthusiasm and their gradual departure; it made her feel even more grateful to teammates who decided to stick around. “Only one member remained, and we invited a third new member to join only later.” The departure of Sue’s teammates once made her worry about whether she could continue with the project, but her faith kept her going. “I have a doubt-believe-doubt-believe thinking pattern. When I doubt the possibility of belief, a miracle happens,” Sue said. From doubts to miracles, Sue’s enthusiasm never waned, and she quit her government job and went into the private sector to launch the project. “There were struggles, but I kept my passion, and I had a voice inside me that told me I had to do this!” Sue said with enthusiasm.

From forming the team, research and development, to prototyping the product, Sue admitted that she had been under a lot of pressure; however, she believes that

if she keeps on believing, she can be the spark that keeps the passion going.

**“I’m just a nobody. I just want to be a spark that starts the engine and find like-minded people to continue the work. I may not be able to do much on my own, but I believe that even the smallest cog can make a difference.”**

