

Getting down-to-earth about sex

In his efforts to promote sexual well-being and help people solve their problems with sexual intercourse, Dr. Wei Siang Yu – better known as Dr. Love – has become a controversial figure. He recently spoke to *Medical Tribune's* Richard Philip about why he does what he does and his role as a medical inventor who breaks societal taboos to create straightforward public health education.

Dr. Wei Siang Yu is giving a whole new meaning to bedside manner. He has assented to approximately eight couples who have asked him to watch them having intercourse, so that he will know exactly what they are doing wrong and be able to give advice that will help them overcome their sexual troubles. It may sound outrageous but the practice may not be entirely unfathomable once you put your judgment on pause and consider the facts.

"Everything stops me from going to witness a couple have sex. I try to find other ways to help them so that they don't need me there," said Wei. However, he obliges to requests for home or hotel visits from couples encountering serious difficulties with intercourse and for whom all other modes of help have been exhausted. He said that couples seek him out to set matters right because they perceive him as being "open minded, non-judgmental and fairly safe" and would not trust "any guy on the street about their private lives."

“ I am doing professional work. They don't understand what the process is, what kind of position I am taking ...

Wei is not just any guy on the street. He is a medical doctor who graduated with an Honors MBBS from Australia's Monash Medical School in 1995. Besides his medical training Wei's true skill lies in his ability to package his expert knowledge in sexual and reproductive matters and make them accessible to the masses via simple means, such as text messages, online tips and television shows.

The 39-year-old medical inventor and expert in sexual health and couple wellness, also known as Dr. Love, rose to fame in 2001 after creating a service that used text messages to remind women when they were going to menstruate and when they were going to ovulate. This service was well received considering that in many countries abortion was illegal and contraception was not practiced. Wei's creation therefore had the potential to prevent unwanted pregnancies as well as aid conception.

"From talking about fertility, sperm, eggs and babies, everybody thought I should be Dr. Love. Maybe because I have a friendly face, there were a lot of love and sex questions coming to me," said Wei who was the youngest nominee for the CNN People's Choice Award in 2003.

To answer these questions Wei developed the Dr. Love hotline where people could text queries about sex and get answers without having to feel shy about asking such questions face-to-face. The hotline, which was launched in Singapore and Jakarta, immediately became a hit with thousands of text messages flooding in. In 2005, Wei's *Love Airways* television show, Singapore's first TV program on sexual topics, was aired and in the following year a magazine by the same moniker was launched.

To explain why certain sex problems warrant his presence in the bedroom Wei gave the example of a couple that is unable

to have intercourse in various positions. "This guy said to me ... 'She feels pain and does not want to do it.' The wife also did not know what the problem was ... I know they are desperate because there is no way to explain it. They don't know what the problem is. I also don't know. So I will tell them to try this or that. When they really cannot work it out and come crying, then I investigate the issue. You really have to go into the bedroom," he said.

Wei's version of evidence-based medicine may ruffle the moral scruples of many, but he said that he adopts a logical approach. "The people don't understand this kind of thing so I have to teach them. It is a biomechanical thing. I tell the man: 'You know the vaginal angle is like that and you keep doing it like this – of course she feels pain, and she doesn't have discharge, and screams all the time. She doesn't want it.'"

Wei has observed that "most couples are not able to exercise their primal instincts." He believes that his role is in helping the cou-

ple get in touch with their primal instincts so that they can save their marriage. One couple said to him that they could not kiss anymore and that there was no intimacy between them.

"They can't even kiss, let alone have sex. These people have got their lawyer's letter ready and they are saying: 'We really don't know what to do. We've got a kid and things are going so badly. Can you help?' This is not a clinical presentation. It is a social presentation," said Wei.

It is not surprising that Wei's unorthodox methods and the sensational aspects of his approach have shoved the more important work that he has consistently done in creating widespread public awareness about reproductive and sexual health, into the background. Wei puts it directly: "People ask me: 'Why are you dealing with so many sex things? Are you a pervert?'"

"I am doing professional work. They don't understand what the process is, what kind of position I am taking, what kind of new media platforms I am using so that it will benefit a lot of people in mass public education," he continued.

Wei uses a variety of media platforms to promote healthy lifestyles and sexual wellness. One of his projects is the internet portal www.flyfreeforhealth.com that caters to medical tourists who would like to have access to diagnostics, treatments and preventive care from local as well as overseas doctors. For example an Indonesian tourist who wants to do a procedure in Singapore could sign up online and make an appointment with any of the doctors listed on the website.

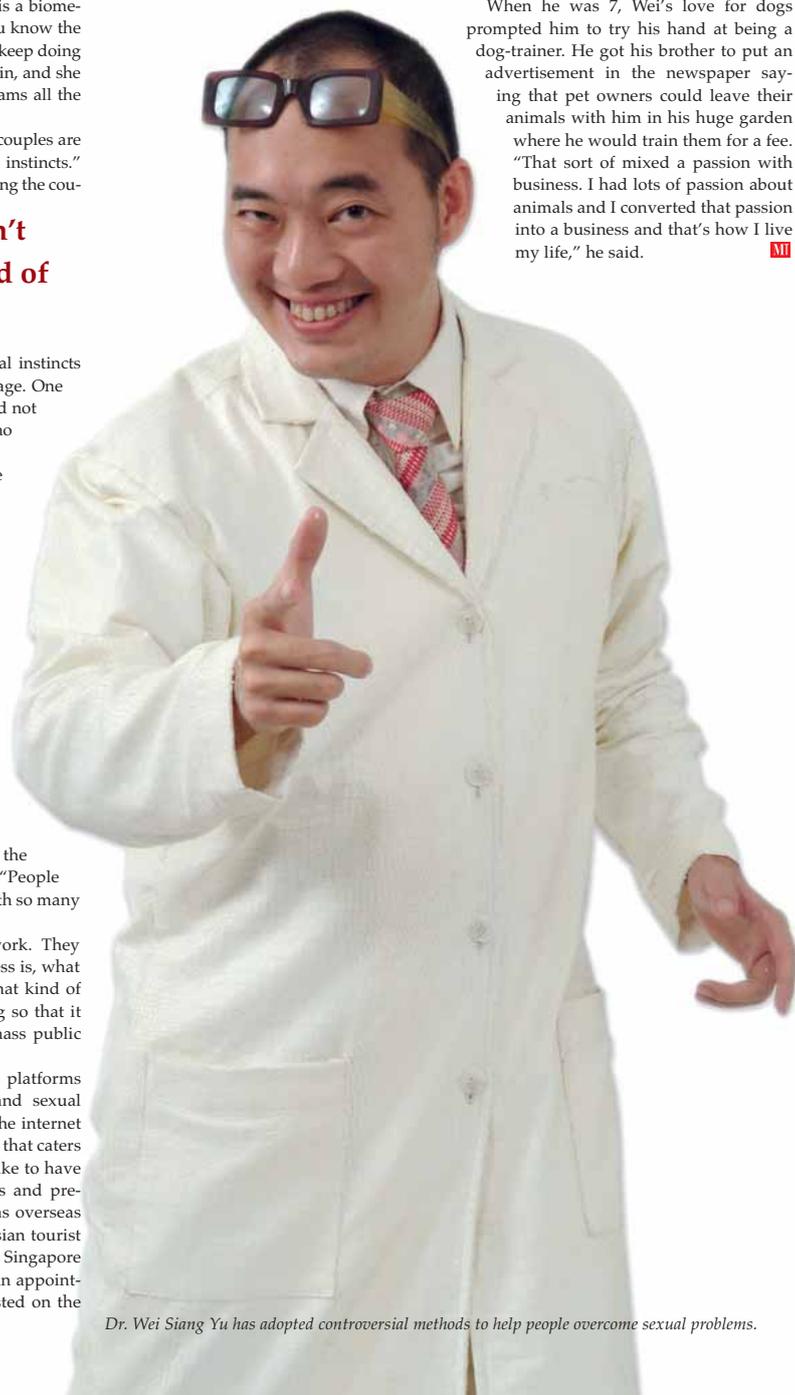
Wei will also be rolling out his TV show entitled the *Dr. Love Super Baby Making Show* with American Idol producer Fremantle Media. The reality TV show will be about 10 couples around the world competing to make a baby. The show which is expected to be out in 2009 will be aired in the Western hemisphere first. In December this year, Wei will also launch a subscription-based sex tips service called Dr. Love Tips in collaboration with Malaysian telecoms company Celcom.

Wei's childhood may provide clues about his adventurous career path. He lived in a bungalow on the East Coast area of

Singapore and spent time playing with his animals. Besides the usual cats and dogs, he had rabbits, pythons, mousedeer, bullfrogs and a monkey. He even had his own treehouse. "I had lots of freedom, lots of independence and I did what I wanted to do. With that kind of environment I grew up just living on my imagination," said Wei.

These years of freeplay were formative for Wei's interest in fertility matters and his spirit of enterprise. "I wanted to have puppies so I decided to breed my dogs. I was reading a lot of books to understand the whole hormonal cycle of the dog," Wei said.

When he was 7, Wei's love for dogs prompted him to try his hand at being a dog-trainer. He got his brother to put an advertisement in the newspaper saying that pet owners could leave their animals with him in his huge garden where he would train them for a fee. "That sort of mixed a passion with business. I had lots of passion about animals and I converted that passion into a business and that's how I live my life," he said. MI



Dr. Wei Siang Yu has adopted controversial methods to help people overcome sexual problems.