



MICHELE KONG

Professor of Pediatrics, UAB and KultureCity

How did you choose the career you are in? I am a pediatric critical care physician. Growing up in a fishing village in Malaysia, I was constantly surrounded by children who were lacking basic necessities and medical care. They were my inspiration since I was young to become a doctor.

What has been the most defining moment of your career? When my son was diagnosed with autism. Our journey with him opened my eyes to the issue of accessibility and exclusion that many families and special needs individuals experience. It was a defining moment that led to the creation of KultureCity.

What are your goals for the next 10 years? To make our world inclusive for all individuals, particularly those

with invisible disabilities.

Have you had a pivotal moment in your career? If so, what happened? I realized that many of our patients who present to the hospital with an acute illness have sensory, communication and social challenges that become barriers to their medical management. This led to the development of the sensory program at our hospital.

What have you done to keep moving forward professionally during the pandemic? As an intensivist, I have been taking care of critically ill children with Covid throughout the pandemic. We also developed a training program for law enforcement officers in how to handle crisis situations involving individuals with disabilities.