# SMJ

### SINGAPORE MEDICAL JOURNAL JOURNAL OF THE SINGAPORE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

<u>Editor</u> Prof Wilfred C G Peh

Associate Editors Dr Chan Yiong Huak Dr Chin Jing Jih Dr Chow Wan Cheng Dr Chuah Khoon Leong A/Prof Ho Nai Kiong Dr Eugene Liu Hern Choon Dr Peh Lai Huat Dr Pwee Keng Ho A/Prof Paul Ananth Tambyah Dr Kelvin Tan Kok Hian Dr Jackie Tan Yu Ling Dr Teo Wee Siong

Editorial Consultant A/Prof C Rajasoorya

International Corresponding Editors Prof Linda Clever (USA) Prof Malai Muttarak (Thailand) Prof Ng Kwan Hoong (Malaysia) Prof Neil Pride (UK) Prof Tan Chong Tin (Malaysia) Prof S Y Tan (USA) Prof Teh Bin Tean (USA) Prof Victor Yu (Australia)

<u>Ex-Officio</u> Dr Lee Pheng Soon Dr Raymond Chua

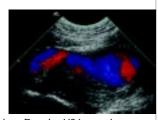
Editorial Manager Chua Gek Eng

<u>Editorial Executives</u> Miranda Lau Rini Saadon

SMJ Webmaster Regina Chin

Editorial Office Address Editor Singapore Medical Journal Singapore Medical Association 2 College Road Singapore 169850 Fax: (65) 6224 7827 Email: smj@sma.org.sg Website: www.sma.org.sg/smj

Permit No: MICA (P) 198/07/2005 ISSN 0037 - 5675



Colour Doppler US image shows an aneurysmal dilatation of an artery in the right gluteal region, with turbulent flow and thrombus formation within. (Refer to pages 426-428)

# The second century of medical education in Singapore: reflecting on the past and looking to the future

W C G Peh

The first century of medical education in Singapore was recently celebrated with the prominence deserving of a premier institution that started life very humbly as the Straits and Federated Malay States Government Medical School on July 3, 1905. Our medical school was formed as a result of a petition from leading Chinese and other non-European communities, headed by the Honourable Mr Tan Jiak Kim, a businessman and philanthropist. The then Colonial Secretary stated "lack of student material" as the main difficulty for the establishment of the school. Reflecting the cautious approach adopted by Sir John Anderson, then Governor of the Straits Settlements, a foundation fund of \$71,000 from public subscription was requested from the Colonial Secretary. A sum exceeding this amount was raised at short notice from the Chinese community in Singapore and Penang, making launching of our medical school possible<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is very appropriate that a century later, another significant philanthropic contribution has resulted in our medical school being renamed the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine of the National University of Singapore. It is hoped that this endowment will not only re-spark the spirit and tradition of philanthropy for Singapore medicine, but also refocus academic medicine so as to reach truly international levels in all disciplines. It is well recognised that all top medical institutions worldwide rely heavily on generous and altruistic benefactors in order to fund and sustain their teaching and research activities.

At the Centennial Medical Dinner held at the Istana on July 3, 2005, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew pointed out that "promising students will gravitate towards good teachers", and "students are likely to become outstanding graduates when they meet stimulating teachers". Minister Mentor Lee also observed that of the initial batch of seven students who graduated in 1910, only three came from Singapore<sup>(2)</sup>.

While our medical school has produced many cohorts of doctors who have served Singapore very well over the past century, we could do more to return to our roots in embracing talented individuals from outside of Singapore. The establishment of our second medical school, a graduate-level entry American-style programme in collaboration with Duke University, represents a big step forward in bringing diversity and a fresh infusion of ideas and expertise in the form of students, teachers and researchers to Singapore. The inevitable friendly competition with our existing medical school will be beneficial to all.

To commemorate the start of the second century, the Singapore Medical Journal is pleased to launch, over the coming year, a series of historical articles entitled the Centennial of Medical Education. Singapore Medical Journal 2 College Road Singapore 169850

W C G Peh, MD, FRCP, FRCR Editor

Correspondence to: Prof Wilfred C G Peh Tel: (65) 6327 5843 Fax: (65) 6224 7827 Email: smj.editor@ sma.org.sg Most of the articles will be authored by Professor Lee Yong Kiat, widely recognised as the leading medical historian in Singapore. Many factual gems can be gleaned from the first article on the evolution of Medicine as a specialty in Singapore<sup>(3)</sup>. For example, being a radiologist, I was gratified to learn that Dr John Sutton Webster, who was appointed the very first Professor of Medicine in 1922, chose, on successfully passing the Cambridge radiological qualification, to relinquish this professorial appointment to return to his passion of Radiology and became Singapore's first specialist radiologist in 1926.

Professor Lee's article also highlights the important contributions made by government doctors, particularly from the Singapore General Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, to educating medical students. Most of the teaching staff in the early years were in fact doctors from the government service, army doctors and general practitioners. Our two medical schools should consider substantially increasing the involvement of doctors and scientists from outside the University, e.g. restructured hospitals, government medical services, private sector, military medical corps and Biopolis, to maximise utilisation of our talent pool to teach and inspire our future generations of doctors.

Considered reflection of our past will positively influence planning for the future.  $\mathfrak{M}$ 

## REFERENCES

- 1. Lim KH, ed. Centenary of Tertiary Education 1905-2005. Singapore: Alumni Association, 2005.
- 2. Lee KY. Reflections on higher education. Straits Times 2005 Jul 5; Review, 21.
- Lee YK. A brief introduction to the evolution of Medicine as a specialty in Singapore. Singapore Med J 2005; 46:372-6.

#### Publisher

Singapore Medical Association Level 2, Alumni Medical Centre 2 College Road Singapore 169850 Tel: (65) 6223 1264 Fax: (65) 6224 7827 Email: smj@sma.org.sg URL http://www.sma.org.sg/smj

Design and Advertising Equity Communications Pte Ltd 145 Neil Road Singapore 088874 Tel: (65) 6324 7822 Fax: (65) 6324 7833 Email: enquiries@equity.com.sg

For advertising matters, call or email

- Charlie Teo at Tel: (65) 6324 4337 Email: charlieteo@equity.com.sg
- Gevin Ernest at Tel: (65) 6324 4337 Email: gevin\_e@equity.com.sg

Instructions to Authors Updated version can be accessed at: http://www.sma.org.sg/smj/ instructions.pdf

Printed by Entraco Printing Pte Ltd

The Singapore Medical Journal is published monthly by the Singapore Medical Association. All articles published, including editorials, letters and book reviews, represent the opinion of the authors and do not reflect the official policy of the SMA or Institution with which the authors are affiliated unless this is clearly specified. The Publisher cannot accept responsibility for the correctness or accuracy of the advertisers' text and/or claim or any opinion expressed. The appearance of advertisements in the Journal does not necessarily constitute an approval or endorsement by the SMA of the product or service advertised.

Articles published in the Singapore Medical Journal are protected by copyright. No material in this journal may be reproduced photographically or stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, etc. without the prior written permission of the publisher. The contents of this publication are not to be quoted in the press without permission of the Editor.