

# Wealth is Just Awaiting

*By Dr Terence Lim, Editorial Board Member*



**J**erry Seinfeld, the American comedian, once made an illuminating remark about the essence of the doctor-patient relationship. He said: "When you go to see a doctor, you first have to sit in The Waiting Room. There is no avoiding this, it's the name of the room."

The clinic waiting area crystallizes the hierarchy of the doctor-patient relationship. Having a roomful of people waiting to seek a professional opinion automatically elevates the position of the caregiver. In an age where respect for doctors is no longer a given, waiting must certainly rank among the top few causes of doctor-patient conflict. I think if all patients were seen immediately on arrival to the clinic or ward, doctors will no longer have to entertain complaints from the public.

This is obviously not possible, so the next best thing to improve doctor-patient relationships is to take the edge out of waiting. And this can be done by simply providing entertainment. We should model our hospitals after our airport. After all, departing passengers at Changi certainly never minded the hours of waiting at the terminals. Simply provide duty-free shopping, massage chairs, smoking areas and bars. If we had all these in the hospitals, no patient will mind the long waiting times. Doctors will then be free for CME, proper sit-down lunches and medical student teaching.

And soon, like our airport, the hospitals will be an engine for economic growth, enabling our Ministry of Health to be renamed the Ministry of Wealth. ■

**About the author:**

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