

Loyalty and Commitment

The citation for SMA Honorary Member Dr Chee Phui Hung, delivered by Prof John Wong



- Prof John Wong delivers the citation for Dr Chee.



- Dr Chee gives an impromptu speech, urging the medical alumni to unite.

Editorial Note:

The SMA Honorary Memberships were conferred on Dr Chee Phui Hung and Prof Lee Yong Kiat at the SMA Annual Dinner, on 8 May 2004, at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel.

Acting Minister for Health and Senior Minister of State for Finance, Mr Khaw Boon Wan; SMA President Dr Lee Pheng Soon; distinguished guests; colleagues; ladies and gentlemen.

It is my honour and pleasure to present to you Dr Chee Phui Hung for conferment of the highest award that the Singapore Medical Association can bestow on one of its members: that of Honorary Membership.

This is something which is both easy and difficult. Easy because Dr Chee is one of the few people in the medical community who needs no introduction. Difficult because he is larger than life, and no citation can do justice to someone who is known throughout the medical community of Singapore and Malaysia, as well as the diaspora in Australia, the United Kingdom, and North America, as the "Agong".

I am told by the SMA Council that Dr Chee is a most unconventional candidate for its highest award. He is not an academic; he does not fulfill current CME requirements; and he has submitted most SMA Councils to the most withering interrogations at the annual AGMs. Yet it was a unanimous decision to award him this, and the question which we should be asking is: "Why only now, and why not earlier?"

Much has been said about him at previous ceremonies, but as we have some new graduates, let me try and encapsulate 82 years of life well lived.

Dr Chee belonged to the first cohort of students who graduated from the then University of Malaya with the MBBS. His university days were most remembered for his orientation of all incoming freshies and freshettes; no one was spared, even future prime ministers and leaders. Perhaps as a taste for what was to come, he was President of the Literary and Debating Society, and Chairman of the combined Medical and Raffles Colleges Students Union at the foundation of the University of Malaya in 1949. Those were passionate and heady days.

On graduation, he had a brief career in the Department of Bacteriology of the Faculty of Medicine before moving into general practice. He was on the council of the Malaya Branch of the British Medical Association, which on independence became the Singapore and Malaysia Medical Associations respectively. He continued to serve on the Committee of the Singapore Medical Association before devoting his time in the 1960s to the Alumni Association of the King Edward VII College of Medicine, which is now simply known as the Alumni. He was Chairman of the Southern Branch and President of the whole association, but now leads by being acknowledged as simply the "Agong", for which the association conferred upon him their Gold Medal in 1984, and a one-of-a-kind Special Agong Gold Medal in 1995, bestowed by another eminent alumnus, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.