

Citation of Prof Arthur Lim Siew Ming on his Conferment of Honorary Membership of the Singapore Medical Association

Dr Ang Beng Chong



Conferment of the SMA Honorary Membership on Prof Arthur Lim.

This is not the first time that Prof Arthur Lim has been so honoured – this is one in a long line of such occasions. Time does not allow me to do justice to a citation of Prof Lim. My good friend, Dr Khoo Chong Yew who once read the citation of Arthur said, “He has already accomplished more than what most men would accomplish in three or four life-times.”

Prof Lim was born on 24 April 1934 in Hong Kong but he studied at the St Andrew's School, Singapore. He was an exceptional student, who excelled in both academic and the sports field. He was the National Junior Tennis Champion. Prof Lim is the first Singaporean to obtain the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of London in 1962. He has been active in the academic field ever since.

Prof Lim's achievements are astounding to normal mortals like us. He has published more than 350 scientific papers and written 24 books in the past 40 years. He has delivered 19 named lectures, been on the Editorial Board of 13 international journals, received 19 awards from all around the world for his work in promoting ophthalmology. He is not only the Clinical Professor and Head of the Department of Ophthalmology, National University of Singapore, he is also Emeritus Senior Consultant at the Singapore National Eye Centre.

Furthermore, he is also Honorary Professor, Tianjin Medical University,

People's Republic of China; Honorary Visiting Professor, Beijing Medical University, People's Republic of China; Honorary Professor, People's Liberation Army General Hospital, Beijing, People's Republic of China and Honorary Director, International Intra-ocular Implant Training Centre, Tianjin, People's Republic of China. I regret that I have to stop here or it may take the whole evening to complete the list of Prof Lim's achievements.

In 1986, Prof Lim was instrumental in the establishment of the Department of Ophthalmology at the National University Hospital and also the Department of Ophthalmology, National University of Singapore. He was also responsible for bringing to Singapore the post-graduate examination in ophthalmology of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, which is held conjointly with the Master of Medicine in Ophthalmology, with Prof Lim himself as the Chief Examiner.

The Singapore National Eye Centre also owes its existence to Prof Lim when in 1989, he became its Founding Medical Director. The Eye Centre is now one of the leading Eye Centres in the world.

Prof Lim also steered the Singapore

Blindness Programme. He has established four eye centres in the People's Republic of China, which in all have catered to a million people who are suffering from cataract.

Arthur has an eye for beauty. The art collection in his clinic is rumoured to be valued at several million dollars. He prides himself in having purchased them at a time when their value was only a fraction of what they are now.

Arthur is himself a well-known artist, having exhibited his works in Singapore and Paris. He is also a sculptor and his famous 'Happy Owl' sculpture stands at the entrance of the Clinical Research Centre. He is presently trying his hand at being a playwright, having successfully produced the play 'To Freedom with Love'.

Let me end on a personal note, regarding his spontaneous generosity and willingness to share his knowledge and skills with anyone. In the early 1970s at a time when there was no structured training programme in ophthalmology, I was an eye trainee preparing to take my final FRACS exams. It was Prof Lim who personally tutored me. Every Saturday afternoon, he would invite me to his clinic,

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Medical Association as its President and the Singapore Medical Alumni as its President during the turbulent times.

Prof Lim has devoted incalculable time and energy as Chairman of the National University of Singapore Endowment Fund. He has raised, together with matching government contribution, over \$162 million in the establishment of several prominent Professorships in Science, Engineering, Economics, Law and Medicine.

Beyond Singapore's shores, Prof Lim has been very active in Prevention of

show me his own patients and discussed the management of the cases, quizzed me and prepared me for the vivas. For that, I will be eternally grateful to him.

There are many of us here tonight who have also experienced his generosity, Arthur has the knack for helping the underdog. So on behalf of all of us, Prof, thank you very much for your generosity.

In recognition of Prof Arthur Lim's meritorious service to medicine and the community, we of the Singapore Medical Association are pleased and proud to honour him today. ■

Doctors should be trained to assume leadership of the health team and exercise this leadership through medical professionalism.

So what is this concept of Professionalism? Isn't the medical doctor like any tradesman akin the motor mechanic, who repairs human bodies or a medical hall shopkeeper selling drugs? The contemporary world has embraced the concepts of free trade, the introduction of competition for providers of services and goods, and letting the market forces decide what is best for society. So should not medical services be any different from telephone services?

The concept of professionalism is built on the following pillars:

- Expertise – body of knowledge
- Trusteeship
- Professional standards and self-regulation
- Ethics
- Service

In the concept of professionalism, society recognises discrete bodies of knowledge and skills which are important to preserve, propagate and develop for the common good of the community like medicine, law, architecture, accountancy, engineering. If this body of knowledge gets into the hands of the unscrupulous or the unethical, a large number of the vulnerable members of the society may suffer with accompanying loss of trust; and harmony in the society. The society therefore entrusts the management of this body of knowledge to the profession as trustees. In our case the medical profession is entrusted with the proper training development, regulation and practice of medicine for the benefit of humankind.

Professionals undergo long and supervised training and education at the end of which they must show competence and this gains them entry into the registry of medical practitioners.

Being given the privilege to access the most private happenings of patients lives and the consent to perform complicated medical procedures on the human, it is imperative that the registered

medical practitioner is regulated not only by the law of the land but in addition by medical ethics and health law.

The society expects the medical profession, given the exclusive right to manage the body of medical knowledge, to gain their livelihood by providing dedicated service to the public. An appropriate fee commensurate to the level of service provided is the entitlement of the doctor. Professionals value performance above rewards. Medical professional status is not an inherent title by training alone but granted in trusteeship by society. Trust can be achieved only when both as individuals and as a profession our daily activities are seen to be consistent, accountable and transparent.

Professionalism unlike commercialism is built on expertise, not just a marketable

product; on cooperation and teamwork and not competition; relieve of the suffering of the ill and not marketshare, benefit of the patient and society and not profit maximisation for the management and for the shareholders; hard work and integrity, not advertising and sales gimmicks.

The practice of medicine is rooted in a covenant of trust among patients, physicians and society. The public must believe and see the medical profession as trustworthy. To remain trustworthy, physicians must meet the obligations expected of society.

The physician is obligated to be a healer and a professional. This role is built on expertise based on medical science grounded by medical ethics and dispensed on the ideal of service to humanity. ■

SMA CENTRE FOR MEDICAL ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM

Education • Resource • Research • Leadership

CORE PURPOSE

To develop and promote the art and science of medical ethics and medical practice and their application for the betterment of patient care and public health.

BACKGROUND & PHILOSOPHY

That the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) collectively and physicians individually should take responsibility and provide leadership on the development and application of medical ethics. Concepts of medical ethics need to be translated to daily clinical practice thus enabling physicians to practise ethical medicine.

There is a need to recognise and remove barriers to good ethical medical practice.

All doctors have a duty to maintain good medical practice and patients must be protected from poor practice. The SMA thus embraces a strategy of strengthening our culture of medical professionalism and promoting continuing medical education (CME) and personal professional development (PPD) throughout a doctor's career.

The SMA, through its members and organisational structure must support and empower doctors to provide competent and ethical medical services and product; to our patients.

The scope of activities of the Centre will cover issues of professionalism, ethics, and health law and practice management.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop and serve as a Resource centre on medical ethics and health law.
- To develop and provide educational programmes for physicians, allied health professionals and other non-medical professions on medical ethics, health law and practice management.
- To develop standards of ethical medical practice and their applications and clinic practice.
- To promote community (public) awareness of current medical and ethical issues in healthcare.
- To facilitate and develop research programmes on medical professionalism, ethics, and health law and practice management.
- To provide mediation services and conflict resolution on issues of medical ethics.

The Board of Directors of the SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism are

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