

EQ, IQ & RQ of Doctors

“Performance and success depends on more than brilliance of mind. In our caring profession, Emotional Quotient (EQ) is vital to the success of the doctor-patient relationship”

By A/Prof Chee Yam Cheng



We are pushing for a knowledge-based economy. So is the whole world. Let me discuss IQ before I get onto EQ, both of which I feel are definitely necessary in our profession. One without the other just will not do.

ON INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Knowledge comes in many forms and needs to be dealt with in different ways. The particular form and nature of knowledge affects the way we identify it, find it, capture it, index or label it, store it, transfer it, disseminate it, apply it, monitor it, update it and deal with it when it becomes obsolete. What a mouthful but entirely true as we seek to grapple with the quantum leaps in medicine.

Knowledge has four levels. Data is the most basic level of knowledge. It consists of independent facts that may have no meaning in themselves. Most of the current technology related to knowledge (such as data warehousing) is only useful in managing data.

One level higher is information. Information is data plus context. Information involves perceiving trends, patterns and developments.

The third level is validation. This is the process by which information is proven. This validated knowledge can be relied upon. It comes in two main forms. “Know-why” is the series of causal linkages that explain a phenomenon. “Know-how” is more amorphous and difficult to capture. It could be the ability of a person to lead others or to give good feedback.

The highest level in this four-layered pyramid is intelligence. Intelligence is knowledge plus timely action. Intelligence is never absolutely integrated or complete. It is that small set of warning flags that goes up when specific conditions click into place. Although the information is incomplete, it allows you to take action because you know what your boundary conditions are.

Knowledge can be also explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge can be written down and shared on paper, on discs, or on film. It is the knowledge that goes into textbooks, journals, procedures and protocols. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand exists in the minds and practice of competent, knowledgeable individuals, or among a group of people. This knowledge is more difficult to capture and transmit.

All of you have high IQs. Why, at ‘A’ levels all of you scored 4 distinctions or more. Some even 9 or 11 ‘A’s. So there is no doubt you have a bank full of IQ assets which have grown over the last 10 years at compounding interest rates. You are all rich in IQ – extremely intelligent human beings serving in the medical profession.

ON EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT

What about EQ? Is IQ destiny? Is not our view of human intelligence far too narrow? Do not our emotions play a far greater role in thought, decision making and individual success? Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy and social deftness. These are the qualities that mark people

who excel; whose relationships flourish, who are the stars in society. We need to worry about our EQ bank account and build up its assets.

Emotional intelligence can be defined in five domains. The first domain is knowing one’s emotions. Self-awareness is the keystone of emotional intelligence. People with greater certainty about their feelings are better pilots of their lives.

The second is managing emotions. Handling feelings so they are appropriate is an ability that builds on self-awareness. Basic emotional skill means the capacity to soothe oneself, to shake off rampant anxiety, gloom or irritability. People who are poor in this ability are constantly battling feelings of distress, while those who excel in it can bounce back far more quickly from life’s setbacks and upsets.

The third is motivating oneself. Marshalling emotions in the service of a goal is essential for paying attention for self-motivation and mastery and for creativity. That is why the traits of emotional self-control, delaying satisfaction and stifling impulsiveness underline accomplishment of every sort.

The fourth is recognising emotions in others. Empathy, another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness is the fundamental “people skill.” People who are empathic are more attuned to the subtle social signals that indicate what others need or want. This makes them better at callings such as the caring professions to which we all belong.

The fifth is handling relationships. The act of relationships is in large part, skill in managing emotions in others.

4 levels of Knowledge

- Data - independent facts that may have no meaning by itself.
- Information is data plus context.
- Validation - the process by which information is proven.
- Intelligence - knowledge plus timely action.

5 domains of Emotional Intelligence

- Knowing one’s emotions.
- Managing emotions.
- Motivating oneself.
- Recognising emotions in others.
- Handling relationships.

sensitive issues. Many Singaporeans doctor-hop such that a patient can be seen at many different GP clinics, specialist clinics and hospitals. As such, an unlinked institution-limited EMR is about as much use as trying to preserve an inflamed appendix. And trying to obtain a patient's consent in every case is just unnecessary hard work. While a patient's privacy has

to be protected, should protection hinder care as well? How many patients actually do not want certain things about doctors and not others? Not many, I think.

In the Internet Age, policy makers and care-givers need to embrace the velocity of today's world yet safeguard the individual's perennial rights. It is a huge

undertaking. Yet we can either undertake to do so, or risk being overtaken. ■

References

1. Michael Lewis: *The New, New, Thing, 2000 (Healthon/WebMD)*.
2. *EzyHealth, listed on MainBoard of SGX, 2000.*
3. *Bill Gates: Business at the Speed of Thought, 1999.*
4. *PHMC Act 1999 Section 2.*
5. *PHMC Regulation 12.*

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These are the abilities that undergird popularity, leadership and interpersonal effectiveness. People who excel in these skills do well at anything that relies on interacting smoothly with others. This is what the doctor-patient relationship needs and you must provide all these factors to make it a successful and beautiful relationship.

PORTRAITS OF HIGH IQ AND EQ INDIVIDUALS

To understand the significance of IQ and EQ, we can look at portraits of persons who possess only either high IQ or EQ.

The high IQ pure type (that is, setting aside EQ) is almost a caricature of the intellectual, adept in the realm of mind but inept in the personal world. If male, he is typified by a wide range of intellectual interests and abilities. He is ambitious and productive, predictable and dogged, and untroubled by concerns about himself. He also tends to be critical and condescending, fastidious and inhibited, uneasy with sexuality and sensual experience, inexpressive and detached, and emotionally bland and cold.

By contrast men with high EQ are socially poised, outgoing and cheerful, not prone to fearfulness or worried rumination. They have a notable capacity for commitment to people or causes, for taking responsibility and for having an ethical outlook. They are sympathetic and caring in their relationships; their emotional life is rich, but appropriate. They are also comfortable with themselves, others and the social universe they live in.

Pure high IQ women have the expected intellectual confidence, are fluent in expressing their thoughts, value intellectual matters, and have a wide range of intellectual and aesthetic interests. They

also tend to be introspective, prone to anxiety, rumination and guilt and hesitate to express their anger openly (though they do so indirectly).

High EQ women by contrast, tend to be assertive and express their feelings directly, and to feel positive about themselves; life holds meaning for them. Like the men, they are outgoing and gregarious, and express their feelings appropriately (rather than say, in outbursts they later regret); they adapt well to stress. Their social poise lets them easily reach out to new people; they are comfortable enough with themselves to be playful, spontaneous, and open to sensual experience. Unlike the women purely high in IQ, they rarely feel anxious, or guilty, or sink into rumination.

BALANCING IQ WITH EQ

These portraits are extreme, as all of us mix IQ and EQ in varying degrees. We have both cognitive and emotional intelligence. Of the two, EQ adds far more of the qualities that makes us more fully human.

I am sure we can do with more EQ in each of us. IQ we already have a lot of and we do not need a formal Mensa test to evaluate our level of IQ. But let us balance high scores of IQ with high scores on EQ also. How?

Many a time we hear that someone's attitude is bad. Why? The crux is the lack of listening skills. In any social interaction, there is listening and communication. After all, people must listen to each other; we doctors to our patients and their relatives in order to do our jobs, improve outcome and be successful.

LISTENING SKILLS AND EQ

There are five stages in the listening continuum. The first four stages in ascending order of effectiveness and all within one's

own frame of reference are ignoring, pretend listening, selective listening and attentive listening. The final step is empathic listening. Empathic listening takes the other person's frame of reference into our consideration.

To listen effectively, there are three keys. Firstly, begin listening to others from a neutral, open-minded state. This allows you to really concentrate and focus on what others are saying to you. Seek first to understand. The proof of empathic listening is when you can restate what you have heard and the one you listened to agrees with you. The one you listened to must also feel understood by you.

Secondly, pay attention not only to the logical content of what someone is saying but also to how they say it viz. how they feel about the subject under discussion. If you listen for emotions rather than only words, you will absorb both and your understanding will be deeper.

Thirdly, respond in such a way that proves you are taking the other person seriously. Demonstrate respect for their points of view.

To be successful, you need more than IQ which you already have. More EQ is better than less. Performance and success depends on more than brilliance of mind. In our caring profession, EQ is vital to the success of the doctor-patient relationship.

ON ENTREPRENEURIAL QUOTIENT (THE OTHER EQ)

In today's shrinking world, EQ also refers to entrepreneurial quotient. We want people with a sense of adventure, to strike out into the unknown – into a brave new world, a wilderness of sorts where anything and everything goes. To think creatively, to think outside the box, to go through uncharted waters, to even go where angels fear to tread?

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“The gamble of life is death. Anyway life is like HIV. It is sexually transmitted and the end of life and HIV is death – no doubt about that. But early premature death is a different proposition altogether”.

Are doctors businessmen? Some are trying to be and some already are. But that is not what our training prepared us for. Far from it. It seems today that altruism is a bad word – nothing is for free. If you cannot pay, you probably cannot receive. Or to put it more mildly, you will find it harder and harder to receive. What is the bottom line? Is it only financial? Is the call of mammon the overriding call of our lives?

I have not heard of a successful entrepreneur losing money. To succeed means to make money. Surely that is not what health and health care is about. Or is it? Health and wealth are good to have.

◀ Page 2 – Amendments to SMA Constitution

Art. VIII - Section 4

After the election of the Council has been completed, the annual general meeting shall elect the President, the 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Assistant Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and **Honorary Assistant Treasurer** among those elected to the Council.

Art. VIII Section 7

The 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Assistant Secretary may be re-elected year after year to hold office. The Honorary Treasurer and **Honorary Assistant Treasurer** shall be eligible for up to two terms of one year each consecutively.

Art. VIII Section 8

In the event of any casual vacancy arising in respect of the office of President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Assistant Secretary, or Honorary Treasurer or **Honorary Assistant Treasurer**, the Council shall at its next meeting or as soon as possible thereafter elect one of its members to fill the vacancy.

But if there were one choice, would it be health? Some would disagree.

The “dot.com” fever is abating. It is all about chasing wealth – faster and faster at a younger and younger age. What? Some dot.coms actually lose money but when floated as IPOs, the loss is to the shareholder. The founders have made their big bucks. So if you are considering becoming an entrepreneur, it is most likely that your medical practice will fade away. It will be a tough job being a successful businessman and at the same time, hold a worthwhile practice.

ON RISK QUOTIENT

What then is RQ? It stands for your risk quotient. In a way it is related to the other EQ (Entrepreneurial Quotient). We are being encouraged to take risks – get out from sheltered waters and launch into the deep unknown where perhaps Jaws are waiting. The dictum seems to be - to succeed, you must take risks.

In medicine, we are risk averse for our patients’ sake. We cannot guarantee success but we always tell our patients the risks of a procedure, operation, etc. If the risk of complications or mortality is

a few percent, how many patients would give their consent? The gamble of life is death. Anyway life is like HIV. It is sexually transmitted and the end of life and HIV is death – no doubt about that. But early premature death is a different proposition altogether.

In the practice of medicine, patient safety and patient’s life are paramount – no two ways about it. For any risk of untoward events, the patient’s consent is essential. So our principle to do no harm to patients remains sacrosanct. On it the profession stands.

We remain risk averse. Our RQ is low, very low if not zero – for the patient’s sake. Even if the patient gave consent to a high-risk procedure, not many of us would agree to do it as our reputations would be at stake. We cannot afford to lose everything – our patient and our reputations. Let us keep it that way. ■

Editor’s Note:

A/Prof. Chee based the major part of this article on a speech he gave to new fellows of the Academy of Medicine at the Induction Ceremony in May 2000. The speech was published in the *Annals of the Academy of Medicine* July 2000, Vol 29 No.4. The theme of the speech however is relevant to all doctors.

Art. IX – POWERS & DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION - Section 6 (new)

The Honorary Assistant Treasurer

- (i) The Honorary Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Honorary Treasurer in his duties and responsibilities.
- (ii) All duties, powers and responsibilities of the Honorary Treasurer shall, in his absence, devolve upon the Honorary Assistant Treasurer.

C. TO RENUMBER ARTICLE IX SECTION 6 AS ARTICLE IX SECTION 7 – HONORARY EDITOR

D. TO AMEND THE BENEFICIARY UPON DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

Art. XVI – DISSOLUTION - Section 2

In the event of the Association being dissolved as provided above, all debts and liabilities legally incurred on behalf of the Association shall be fully discharged and the remaining funds will be either divided equally amongst the members or

transferred to a professional medical body or charitable organisation in **Singapore** as decided by the majority of members at a General Meeting convened for the purpose of dissolving the Association or decided by a postal vote of all the members.

II. **The resolution from a member Dr Jerry Tan to amend Article X of the SMA Constitution which was considered at the 40th SMA AGM on 9 April 2000 has been rejected by the Registrar of Societies in accordance with Section 4 of Article XII. 52 members out of 79 voted for this resolution. (52/79 is 65.82%).**

III. Art. II – OBJECTS & POWERS Section (xv) and Art. XIII PROPERTY & TRUSTEES Section 2 which were passed at the 39th SMA AGM, approved and amended by the Registrar of Societies on 15 February 2000, were endorsed at the 40th SMA AGM on 9 April 2000. ■

Dr WM Yue, Honorary Secretary, 41st SMA Council