

Protecting the Doctor

FROM PHYSICAL AND OTHER ABUSE

Doctors suffer abuse in the course of their work. And Singapore is not unique. It can sometimes be violent too. What is important is society's signal to this kind of behaviour.

Society has ruled correctly to take to task recently, a heart-sick man for punching and kicking his doctor for commenting that he did not have an emergency cause for his chest pain. He was jailed three weeks. This was reported in the Straits Times on Wednesday, 27 February 2001.

It is important that doctors are protected from abuse as they go about their work. And this has to come from society and the administration. The SMA is therefore very heartened to see the following statement put up by the

Tan Tock Seng Management:

"We value our staff. They are committed to serving you and doing their best. Mutual respect and understanding will help them to serve you better. The hospital reserves the right to protect them from any physical or verbal abuse and to refuse non-emergency treatment to anyone who abuses them."

The statement should find its place in every hospital and healthcare facility. It is only when the public sees that they cannot use might to bull-doze their way that doctors can do their work without fear. And in an increasingly market-based environment, this is important.

CREATING THE PATIENT MINDSET Mindset is important. What the mind thinks, action will follow. The use of "Client" sets in place a mindset of transactional buying-and-selling. It conjures images

like "the customer is always right" or the "customer is king". This word is really the watershed between respect and abuse of the doctor's position. Perhaps, there should be a serious consideration to expunge the word "Client" and replace it with the more correct label of "Patient" in the doctor-patient relationship. This will be the first step in protecting the doctor in what he is supposed to do.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

The take home messages are the patient has to be patient, and the doctor has to be patient. The doctor-patient relationship is a mutual investment company. This relationship does not work well in a buying-and-selling transactional, forensic and litigious environment. The latter is also the take home message of Garfield in this issue. ■

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PUBLIC FORUM

Saturday, 21 April, 2.00-5.30 pm

Admission Fee: \$5.00 per person

Introduction and Welcome Address

by A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, President, Singapore Medical Association

Keynote Speech by Guest-of-Honour

Dr Teo Ho Pin, Member of Parliament, President, Consumers Association of Singapore, and GPC Chairman for National Development.

(English and Mandarin sessions to be held concurrently in separate rooms)

English Forum

Chairman: A/Prof Goh Lee Gan

Childhood Infections: What you must know

- Coughs and Colds
By Dr Yun Kok Onn
- Fever and Rashes
By Dr Winston Ng

Adult Infections: What you must know

- Cough
By A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean
- Urinary Discomfort
By Dr Leong See Odd
- Sexually-Transmitted-Diseases
By Dr Thirumoorthy

Mandarin Forum

Chairman: Dr Tan Kok Leong

Childhood Infections: What you must know

- Coughs and Colds
By Dr Lim Woan Huah
- Fever and Rashes
By Dr Heng Joo Teck

Adult Infections: What you must know

- Cough
By Dr Quan Wai Leong
- Urinary Discomfort
By Dr Tan Eng Choon
- Viral Hepatitis
By Dr Chow Wan Cheng