Inception of New Family Medicine Programmes

Professor Tan Chorh Chuan

The Director of Medical Services, Professor Tan Chorh Chuan was the Guest of Honour at the launch of the Family Medicine (FM) Academic Year on 23rd June 2001 at the Auditorium of the Institute of Health. The ceremony was organised by the College of Family Physicians Singapore to induct doctors commencing their post-graduate training for the Diploma, Masters and Fellowship this year, and to mark the inception of the Fellowship in Aged Care and the newly structured modular CME courses (see Glossary on pg. 13 and side box). Amongst the guests present was the Master of the Academy of Medicine Singapore, Professor Walter Tan, the CEO of Singhealth, Professor Tan Ser Kiit, senior officials of the Ministry of Health, the National University of Singapore, and the National Healthcare Group.

In his speech, the Director of Medical Services commended “the College and all its partners on their continued commitment towards excellence in Family Medicine (FM)” and expressed the Ministry’s full support for the College’s efforts. He also stressed the important role that Family Physicians (FP) play in the healthcare delivery system of Singapore and the need for further FM training. For doctors who are embarking on the College’s Fellowship programme in Aged Care, he pledged the Ministry’s professional recognition to the doctors who have decided to pursue a career working in community hospitals. He also expressed the Ministry’s hope that the college would set up similar Fellowship programmes in other aspects of community and domiciliary care.

THE ROLES OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Prof. Tan Chorh Chuan said that “GPs currently provide 80% of primary health care in this country; in addition to providing first-line acute and chronic care, General Practitioners (GPs) are key agents in the implementation of our national control programmes for major diseases. The success of these programmes depends greatly on the GPs’ skill and dedication in carrying out health education, screening and primary prevention, as well as ensuring that chronic diseases are well controlled so as to prevent the onset of disabling complications.

With the rapid ageing of our population, family physicians also serve as valuable partners in complementing and supporting the community-based care of elderly patients and their families. This is illustrated by the Ministry’s recently established Primary Care Partnership Scheme, in which GPs are subsidised for providing care to the needy elderly.

Apart from contributing to national efforts to combat chronic disease and to meet the needs of the growing elderly, GPs can also play a role in the management of patients who no longer require specialist care. GPs can provide appropriate follow-up care so that these patients can be cared for more effectively within the community than in overcrowded hospital Specialist Outpatient Clinics.

NEED FOR FURTHER FM TRAINING

To be optimally effective in discharging all these roles, our GPs need to be well trained in Family Medicine. There was a time in the not-too-distant past when the scope of medical knowledge was still relatively modest in dimensions. It was possible then for a GP to render adequate care by the standards of the day for most of his patients based purely on his medical undergraduate training, supplemented perhaps by an occasional journal article or drug talk.

The GP of today, however, practises in a very different landscape. He needs...
October and a two-and-a-half-day workshop held from 1-3 November 2001. More details of the courses are available on the SMA Website at http://www.sma.org.sg/whatsnew/.

SMA will be holding the SMA-Bayer Clinician-Patient Communication Faculty Development Programme in July/August 2001. These Train the Trainers Sessions will equip participants with the knowledge, experience and materials necessary to eventually conduct the Clinician-Patient Communication Workshop for other healthcare providers in Singapore.

6. CONGRATULATIONS
a. Congratulations to the following who were appointed Associate Deans of their respective hospitals:
   - Dr Khim-Nian Sin Fai Lam (Alexandra Hospital)
   - Dr Low Boon Yong (Changi General Hospital)
   - Clinical Assoc Prof June Lou (KK Women’s Children’s Hospital)

b. Congratulations to Professor Walter Tan on being re-elected the Master of the Academy of Medicine.

c. Congratulations to Associate Professor Cheong Pak Yeon on being elected the President of the College of Family Physicians, Singapore.

Glossary
Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM) is a 2-year CFPS part-time programme for any registered medical practitioner. It consists of 8 quarterly modules conducted by workshops and distance learning (FMTP), small-group tutorials as well as skills course leading to the diploma examination conducted by the Graduate School of Medical Studies (GSMS) of NUS.

Fellowship of the College of Family Physicians Singapore (FCFPS), is a 2-year programme that trains selected doctors with M Med FM for leadership in clinical and academic areas to practise as consultant physicians in Family Medicine. The Aged Care programme launched recently is the first ‘conjoint’ fellowship programme to specially trained FPs in specific disciplines. For more information on any of the above programmes, call CFPS at Tel: 223 1264 or E-mail: rccfps@pacific.net.sg