

Who Wants to be a Doctor? *By Garfield*

The other day my son held a birthday party. He invited six friends. Three were children of so-called heartlanders, Beng Kiang, son of a chicken rice seller, Lian Choo, daughter of a hairdresser and Britney, daughter of a lounge hostess. The other three were offsprings of so-called cosmopolitans, Max Kumar, son of a lawyer, Christopher, son of a banker and Annabelle, daughter of a property tycoon. I was happy for my son because he has a good mix of friends.

The night before the party my wife asked, "How are you going to entertain them?"

"Is it necessary?" I asked her in return, "I don't mind having the party in the house but entertaining them is another matter. I have nothing in common with them. I don't like their food, I don't like the way they talk, I don't like the way they dress, I don't like their music. All the things they like I also don't like. Would you want me to drink and dance with them? Be real dear, the best I can do is to settle the bill. They will enjoy themselves more if we make ourselves scarce."

"But you will be missing an opportunity," she said.

"What opportunity?" I asked.

"Bonding with young people."

"I have no wish to bond with pimply pubescent pests."

"Do you know why you are having so much difficulties with your son? Mainly it is because you don't understand him. Mix with his friends and you will probably discover that your son is actually not abnormal. It will change your perception and attitude. Join them for a while and play a game with them. You will be surprised with the outcome. Please do it."

Whenever my wife says, "Please do it", I always ended up doing it. I am not scared of her or anything like that but I have always been a sucker for a "Please do it" request from the opposite sex.

"OK," I said, but I was at a loss for what to do. I thought hard but could not come up with anything. Then someone switched on the TV and the game show that was on gave me an idea.

Dinner was a pot-pourri of home deliveries from KFC, MacDonalds and Pizza Hut. They seemed to enjoy it.

"Hi gang," I said, "Let me join you for a while." My son gave me a dirty look. I ignored him.

"Uncle, can we have some of your drink?" Max Kumar pointed at my beer. I also ignored him.

"I will play a game with all of you."

"But uncle you are not....."

"Not your generation eh? Hold it. The winner will make a hundred dollars."

They paid attention. I explained, "This game is patterned after the 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' show that all of you are familiar with. The format is about the same, the major difference is that we are playing for a maximum of one hundred dollars only and the title is changed to 'Who wants to be a doctor?'. There are seven of you and just like the original show, only one of you will get to the 'hot seat' to play the main game. However, instead of playing 'fastest finger first', you will be subjected to a spelling test. Those who fail to spell correctly will be eliminated."

The hundred dollars was an attractive bait. I could see that they were eager. I supplied them with paper and pencils.

"Please spell ACNE." The first to be eliminated was my own son. "AKNI" he wrote. I was quite angry and upset with him. I made a mental note to deal with him after the party.

"Please spell ABSCESS." Christopher and Annabelle didn't make it.

"Please spell TESTOSTERONE." Max Kumar failed.

"Please spell GONORRHOEA." Lian Choo and Britney got it wrong. Beng Kiang won the right to be in the 'hot seat'.

"Congratulations, BK," I said, "And now for the real thing. Ten questions. If you answer all of them correctly, you go home \$100 richer. Unlike the TV show there are no help lines, no calling a friend, no polling the audience, no fifty-fifty. Are you ready?"

"Yes uncle," he replied. This son of a chicken rice seller was one confident kid.

"For ten cents, please answer this question. The reason to be a doctor is:

- To help the sick
- To make a lot of money
- For the prestige
- To please your parents."

Beng Kiang had no difficulty with

this question.

"Well done BK. For twenty cents, please answer the next question. A Humbug is:

- A doctor who specialises in infectious diseases
- The bug that transmits Aids
- A financial consultant
- A glib medical practitioner."

"So easy uncle," BK said.

"This is your third question and it is worth fifty cents. The doctor's best friend is:

- The bar waitress
- Another doctor
- The foreign maid
- A bottle of whisky."

He got it right again.

"BK you can take the fifty cents or proceed to the next level which is worth one dollar."

"Uncle, I want to go all the way."

"The person who cares most for the young doctor is:

- The Minister for Health
- The nurse from PRC
- The head of department
- Mother."

He got this right too. It was uncanny for one so young.

"Now for two dollars, please answer this question. What doctors hate most is:

- Continuing medical education
- Hospital food
- Lawyers
- Bedside manners."

"No problem Sir,"

"BK, you are really good. Are you ready for the next question? Take a sip of coke if you like."

"Shoot," he said.

"OK for five dollars, Angina is:

- An RA movie
- A pain arising from the heart
- A pop group
- A motorcycle."

He replied immediately.

"Now for ten dollars, Mortuary is:

- A home for juvenile delinquents
- A concert hall
- A place where dead bodies are kept
- A torture chamber."

Again no problem for BK and I was getting nervous for my pocket.

"BK, three more questions before you hit the jackpot. Do you want to carry on or just take the ten bucks?"

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"Uncle, nothing ventured, nothing gained. This country needs entrepreneurs."

Wah Lau. Young Singaporeans are answering the clarion call of the government.

"For twenty dollars, Geriatrics is:

- a) A study of old people
- b) An ancient ritual
- c) An antique vase
- d) Time wasting."

BK was too good. I had to give him a difficult question to try to trip him.

"BK, for fifty dollars, tell me what the initials SMA stands for?"

- a) Sexually Mature Adolescents
- b) Singapore Medical Association
- c) Sado-Masochist Association
- d) So Many Already."

"Uncle, you give away this one," BK chuckled.

"What do you mean? Fifty dollars of my money is at stake you know?"

"Yes uncle. But see what have you left here? Your SMA newsletter. SMA is Singapore Medical Association lor."

I must try to save my hundred dollars.

"BK, your last question is: Who earns the most?"

- a) A surgeon
- b) A social escort
- c) A politician
- d) Ah Long San."

It was the first time he didn't blurt out the answer straightaway. He was frowning.

"What's the matter BK? This isn't a particularly hard question."

"Uncle. This one I really don't know.

I am confused. You see, my father said that although he had not much education, he is making big money. He also said that each of his shops easily earns five times more than your clinic. He has about fifteen or sixteen outlets so I think selling kuey png earns the most. Anyway, it is just a game. Hundred dollars, nevermind, let me make a guess, I pick....."

He gave the right answer.

"Uncle, do you think I can be a doctor?"

"BK, not only can you be a doctor, you will probably be one of the very best. Don't ever let your father persuade you to sell chicken rice. Ask him to franchise his business and you study medicine."

I sincerely hope so. Doctors in the mould of Beng Kiang are unlikely to stand for any nonsense from any quarters. ■