

Who Moved My Cheese?

By Dr Daniel Fung, Deputy Editor

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A father ranted and raved when the Ministry of Education announced recently that it will annotate all certificates (for PSLE, GCE 'O' and 'A' levels) when children are given special arrangements such as time extensions in cases when children have learning disabilities. "This is discrimination! How can you stigmatise children like this?"

Somehow, this reminded me of doctors ranting and raving about the intention of tying a doctor's practice licence to collection of CME points. No system is perfect. Invariably, we will grumble at change, especially change that affects us.

Our new CEO had implored us to read *Who Moved My Cheese?* a modern fable with useful lessons by a medical doctor. In that book, which most of us will take a day or two to read* (my boss says you can read it in an hour), you will learn about how change is inevitable and that we must anticipate change and make the necessary adjustments before it occurs.

I shall share with you some of the gems (or should I say cheese) I learnt:

ANTICIPATE CHANGE

The writing has been on the wall for some time already. Most developed countries have some kind of continuing medical education. Some countries like Canada have medical audits that check on your practice. If you fail the audit, you will be obliged (actually forced) to take a CME course and pass an examination. In the US, board certification as a specialist is not forever, it is time limited. If we are ever to consider ourselves first world, we must surely act and behave like first world countries. CME is a first world type activity and it has been around for a while.

ADAPT TO CHANGE QUICKLY

I cannot think of any alternative to CME, short of asking doctors to take examinations all over again. With the exploding knowledge base, it is necessary to refresh oneself. Instead of grumbling about how busy we are, realise that CME is also a chance to reflect on lifelong learning and societal paradigm shifts. Make an effort to find out how you can earn the CME points and what needs to be done. I am reminded that CME is like a form of

self-discipline, which will get easier once the inertia against change is overcome.

ENJOY CHANGE

I think CME points on the whole are not difficult to obtain especially if one works in an institution. But for many, time is always a premium in our time-starved world. Some have remarked that we need 36 hours a day for 8 days in order to complete our work in a week. So how can we creatively earn CME points? Make an effort to spend some time every week to attend a talk. There are many such talks and some are organised in very comfortable surroundings. Information on these talks is available online or through a simple phone call to the Singapore Medical Council (SMC, Tel: 6372 3060). I would suggest that you bring along your better half to make it a social event as well. Or gather your friends and instead of going for a game of golf, sit down at a CME event. Or organise a class reunion every now and then and get one specialist colleague to talk. ■

* Unfortunately, reading this will not get you any CME points.