



“...unless the whole system of remunerating GPs is reviewed, no amount of paper qualifications will ever alleviate the plight of general practitioners and family physicians.”

– Dr Wong Sin Hee

Dear Editor,

I refer to Dr Wong Sin Hee’s article “General Practice – Going the Way of the Dodo Bird” in the December 2004 issue of the *SMA News*.

I totally agree with Dr Wong and more. Until, as a corporate body, we GPs charge adequate consultation fees, we will die as the dodos did. We must not allow third parties to exploit us. But most importantly, we must not allow ourselves to do that too. I also agree that we will need to fix this urgently. Then the training can be put to good use. We would also need to educate patients on the meaning of training and its importance in today’s practice. I think the

patients can soon understand that. So, let us do both things together: embarking on upgrading ourselves with papers to show for that, and also exhorting our colleagues to charge a decent consultation fee.

I spent many years on this issue of exhorting our colleagues to charge an adequate consultation fee, and even wrote a paper with Cheong Pak Yean in the *Singapore Medical Journal*. (*Editorial note: See below for a list of related articles.*) Our colleagues will need to stop living off pharmaceutical margins, multi-level marketing (MLM) and other things that make them no better than traders. Let us play an effective role in the health delivery system as frontline doctors, continuing care doctors, and experts in preventive care of our patients. There is a lot we can do to make a difference without MLM, skin peels and other distractions. It is about time we stop doing these, and charge an adequate consultation fee for the more meaningful services we can do. The specialists do better than GPs because they try to do what is their core business and charge the patients for that. We should do likewise from today.

Following the SMA Guideline on Fees would be a good start. Can the GPs as a fraternity stand together and charge an adequate consultation fee? I hope so.

ASSOC PROF GOH LEE GAN ■

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2. SMA Guidelines on Fees in Clinics. *SMA News* 2001; 33(6):4. http://www.sma.org.sg/sma_news/3306/guidelines.pdf
3. Goh LG. Challenges in Family Medicine. *Singapore Med J* 1999; 40(12): 723-5. www.sma.org.sg/smj/4012/articles/4012fcm5.htm
4. Cheong PY. The Tasks Ahead. *SMA News* 1997; 28(11): 2. www.sma.org.sg/sma_news/2811/news/2811N2.htm

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The Editor
SMA News
Singapore Medical Association
Alumni Medical Centre, Level 2
2 College Road, S 169850
Fax: 6224 7827
Email: news@sma.org.sg

