

Citation for Professor Bernard Lo, SMA Lecturer 2006

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Today, we are very privileged to have as our SMA Lecturer a distinguished medical colleague from the United States (US), an internationally acclaimed leader in bioethics, whose prolific work over the years has made him one of the leading authorities in the fields of bioethics. Professor Bernard Lo has devoted much of his professional career researching and advocating the importance of clinical ethics, professionalism and communication in the practice of medicine. It is therefore appropriate that he should be addressing members of the medical profession at the lectureship that anchors SMA's Annual Ethics Convention. This address serves symbolically as an annual renewal of SMA's commitment to ethics and professionalism.

Professor Bernard Lo obtained his premedical bachelor's degree in physics, and master degrees in comparative literature and history of science. He obtained his medical degree from Stanford University in 1975, and completed his training in internal medicine at Stanford in 1978. He went on to do a postdoctoral fellowship in medical ethics & clinical epidemiology. Since 1989, Professor Lo has been the Professor of Medicine and Director of the Programme in Medical Ethics at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

As an internationally acclaimed bioethicist, Professor Lo is one of those unique few whose academic achievements and publications extend into both clinical and research ethics. He is a practising clinician directly involved in patient

care, which gives his writings and teachings an added dimension of practicality and authority. He has authored more than 170 publications on various topics related to clinical ethics, stretching from issues in end-of-life care, HIV infection, doctor-patient relationships and communication, to topics in research ethics such as stem cell research and research involving vulnerable subjects.

He is probably best known as the author of the widely used textbook on clinical ethics *Resolving Ethical Dilemmas: a Guide for Clinicians*, which has helped many medical professionals analyse and approach their ethical dilemmas. This book is an outstanding work for not only being concise and precise but is at the same time comprehensive and comprehensible for the practising clinician. For those of you who are fans of *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*, you will be aware of Professor Lo's clearly written chapter on "Ethical Issues in Clinical Medicine".

Professor Lo is acknowledged both within US and internationally as an accomplished teacher and trainer in clinical ethics. In addition to his responsibility as Programme Director in Medical Ethics at UCSF, he also co-directs the mandatory ethics teaching programme for UCSF third year students. He developed a course on Responsible Conduct of Research at UCSF that 120 postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty take each year before they begin research with human participants. Professor Lo is also the National Programme Director for the Greenwall Faculty Scholars Programme in

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Bioethics, a career development award for junior faculty members.

Professor Lo's career as internist and bioethicist spans over a quarter of a century, serving as chairperson, member, advisor and consultant in various ethics boards, committees, task force, workgroups and expert panels, most notably as a member of the Ethics Committee of the American College of Physicians from 1990 to 1995 and the US National Bioethics Advisory Commission from 1996 to 2001.

He chaired the Expert Panel to Develop Clinical, Ethical, and Policy Recommendations Regarding Care Near the End of Life, which was convened by the American College of Physicians from 1997 to 2001. Currently, he serves on the Council of the US Institute of Medicine.

Those of us who are acquainted with Professor Lo know him as an easy-going and humble person... But beneath this soft-spoken and gentle friend and father lies a firm and determined personality, one who is without fear and favour...

Professor Lo's interest and research into the ethical issues of stem cell research has led to his appointment in advisory committees and boards responsible for developing guidelines for stem cell research. He presently co-chairs the Standards Working Group of the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine, which will recommend regulations for stem cell research funded by the state of California.

Professor Lo's leadership also extends to the area of medical journalism and publishing. He was a founding member of the editorial board of *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, and has also served on the editorial boards of esteemed journals such as *Annals of Internal Medicine* (1992-1995), *American Journal of Medicine* (1997-2004), and *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (1987-1991).

Incidentally, this is not Professor Lo's first visit to Singapore. He had previously served as a consultant to the Singapore Bioethics Advisory Committee (BAC) from 2001 to 2002, and in February this year, Professor Lo was invited by the Ministry of Health to Singapore as a HMDP Visiting Expert in clinical ethics. The BAC has since reappointed Professor Lo as a member of its BAC's International Advisory Panel. He is also presently in Singapore at the BAC's invitation to engage in dialogues and to provide training for members of local IRBs and the research community. The SMA swiftly seized the opportunity to invite him to be this year's SMA Lecturer, and as they say, the rest is history. Bernard is very well-informed about our work ethic in Singapore, and has shown a strong commitment to share his knowledge and skills in the challenge of nurturing and guiding Singapore towards its goal of becoming an international centre of biomedical ethics.

Those of us who are acquainted with Professor Lo know him as an easy-going and humble person who dotes on his precociously intelligent daughter. But beneath this soft-spoken and gentle friend and father lies a firm and determined personality, one who is without fear and favour, who can only be persuaded in an ethical discussion by arguments that are more cogent, logical and coherent.

I shall now quote Dr Chin Jing Jih, Director of SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism, who is responsible for writing most, if not all, of this citation:

"I have personally witnessed a discussion on an ethics-related issue between him and his wife, who happens to be a geriatrician like myself, where he showed me clearly that not only is he able to communicate his thoughts and arguments in an authoritative, coherent and clear manner, he is a true clinical ethicist who walks the talk, and leads by an exemplary lifestyle. Firm and principled, yet open and fair, I have found my engagement with him totally stimulating and instructive. I have learnt from him that a true medical ethicist goes beyond just the intellectual dimension to a philosophical approach that incorporates a sense of righteousness, compassion and integrity."

Professor Bernard Lo has chosen today to speak to us on a challenging topic entitled "*Professionalism in the Age of Computerised Medical Records*". It is indeed my privilege and pleasure on behalf of the Singapore Medical Association to invite Professor Bernard Lo to deliver the SMA Lecture 2006. ■