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## College Art Gallery



"Singapore River"

by Goh Chye Khee June 1987

College of Medicine Building  
16 College Road #01-02  
Singapore 169854  
Tel : (65) 62230606  
Fax: (65) 62220204  
Email: collegemirror@cfps.org.sg

## Eight Health Priorities for Singapore

**M**r Khaw Boon Wan assumed the stewardship of the Ministry of Health Singapore as the Acting Minister of Health on 1st August 2003. In his first month in office, he met and addressed various stake-holders in the healthcare community in Singapore. The Council of the College and some general practitioners were invited to meet him at a tea reception at Harrower Hall on 22nd August 2003. The Minister of State, Dr Balaji Sadasivan, the Director of Medical Services, Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, the Permanent Secretary, Mr Moses Lee were also present at the meeting



Acting Minister for Health  
Mr Khaw Boon Wan

Addressing the gathering, Mr Khaw outlined the 8 priorities of his Ministry (listed in the side-box). He emphasized the important role of family physicians. In his vision, family physicians in Singapore must practise holistic medicine and help patients both in health and in sickness. He should practice preventive medicine and coach his patients to adopt a healthy life-style. Family physicians must not be just a "cough and cold doctor". Instead they must manage diseases from the time the patient fall ill, during his hospital treatment and after he is discharged from the hospital.

In his view, every Singaporean should have his own family physician who is well trained to deliver a high level of care. Information technology should be leveraged to make healthcare more efficient and effective. He feels that information technology is a major enabler that will help to achieve the other priorities. For example, better use of information technology can correct information asymmetry and patients can become better informed. Greater transparency and readily available information would lead to a more efficient market.

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### Eight Health Priorities

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Build Healthy Population<br>- promote healthy lifestyle                          | 5. Manage Healthcare Inflation<br>- spend within our means<br>- manage patients' expectation<br>- ration limited resources                         |
| 2. Manage Diseases<br>- maximise overall cost-effectiveness                         | 6. Ensure Long-term Healthcare Financing<br>- enhance 3Ms framework  |
| 3. Exploit IT<br>- increase productivity<br>- enhance care                          | 7. Safeguard medical standard<br>- ensure quality, reliability & cost-effectiveness<br>- develop manpower & facilities<br>- regulate appropriately |
| 4. Counter disease outbreak<br>- enhance surveillance<br>- mount effective response | 8. Exploit economic value as Regional Medical Hub<br>- ensure cost competitiveness   |

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# Dean of the Faculty of Medicine NUS visits College

The new Dean of the Faculty of Medicine NUS, Prof John Wong, visited the College on the 22nd August 2003. He was received by members of the College Council and briefed on the various training programs of the College. The visit to the College was part of Prof Wong's series of meetings with the various professional bodies. He believes that the medical faculty must work closely with the professional bodies.

"Medical school is the beginning of a 50 year journey in the study of medicine. We need to make sure that the continuum is in line," said Prof John Wong.

He believes that professional bodies that

play a major role in continuing professional development of doctors should be linked

more closely with the medical school. Medical students should be made to understand that they are embarking on a life long learning process and the importance of the roles that the professional bodies play.

He feels that at the end of 5 years of medical school, all students should have a broad understanding of family medicine and develop a whole new set of skills that they would be able to use in their practice, especially if they should eventually enter the ranks of family physicians practicing in the community.

Prof Wong said that his faculty is committed to work with the College to improve the standard of family medicine in Singapore. He shares the vision that having highly trained primary care physicians will result in better health for Singaporeans and more cost-effective use of health care resources.

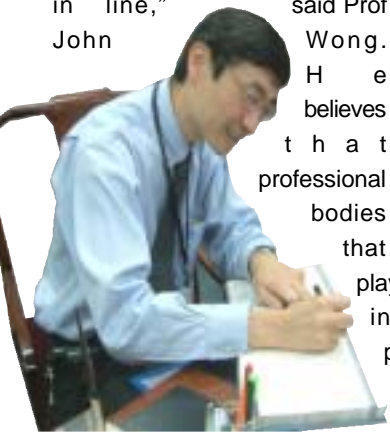
Presently the College is already working very closely with the Faculty of Medicine both in undergraduate and graduate family medicine training. As the

result of the meeting, many new initiatives are now on the drawing board.

In the coming months some of these should bear fruit. Students and doctors training to be better family physicians can look forward to better things to come.



From Left: Dr Matthew Ng Joo Ming, Dr Arthur Tan Chin Lock, A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, Prof John Wong, Dr Cheng Heng Lee, Dr Lee Kheng Hock, Dr Tan See Leng



Signing of College Guest Book

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He believes that cost can be controlled without compromising on the quality of clinical care if we can optimize the use of our resources. His vision for primary care in Singapore is to transform it into a modern and cost-effective component of the nation's health care delivery system.

The College Mirror interviewed some of the people who attended the meeting for their views.

*"The College shares the Minister's vision, especially the part on an enhanced role for the family physician. We look forward to playing our part in the effort to bring this vision to reality"* A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, President CFPS.

*"I think the Minister's vision of a primary care initiative is very timely and important. We should all work together to achieve the goal of enabling family doctors to play a bigger role in the health care system."* A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, Head Division of Family Medicine NUS and Censor-in-Chief, CFPS.

*"We all feel very inspired. We know that the status quo in primary care is not tenable in the long run. Now that the Minister had set the vision and the direction, we should all work together to overcome some of the barriers."* Dr Lee Kheng Hock, Executive Director, College of Family Physicians Singapore.

*"I am very impressed by the clarity of the vision."* Dr Tan See Leng, COO BUPA Healthcare and Council Member CFPS.