

Walk the Talk

By A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean President, College of Family Physicians Singapore

Dr Lily Neo, Chairperson of the Government Parliamentary Committee on Health in her keynote speech in the FM Convocation 2003 outlined the roles that Family Physicians (FPs) can play in preventive, long-term and step-down health care in the context of the whole healthcare system (Pg 5). The Acting Minister, Mr Khaw Boon Wan defined the qualities of a good general practitioner in these areas in a Straits Times interview (ST Pg 6, Aug 26 '03 & quoted in the previous issue of the College Mirror pg 3).

Does Singapore have the critical mass of capacity and capabilities of good well-trained FPs to make an impact on our healthcare system?

The College has trained a large number of doctors in recent years. Certainly, there are some FPs in practice who did not have the opportunity of formal postgraduate training but nevertheless doing good clinical work in the community. To make a significant impact however, there is an urgent need for

Singapore to further train a larger number so that most, if not all clinicians who are not on the MOH specialist register are well trained and equipped to play the roles envisaged by the policy-makers.

In recent years, the College has struggled under severe conditions to develop the training infrastructure. Many College members have sacrificed their time to develop courses and teach. We have now close to 400 vocationally trained FPs. A training cascade has been developed where those trained teach those one or more levels below right to undergraduate level.

We need to recognize the capabilities of these trained doctors by providing the opportunity for them to play the enhanced role. This mindset change can be achieved by reforming administrative structures, by appropriate funding of professional development, subvention of services and by patient education.

It is now the time to *walk* the talk.

19th Council 2003 - 2005

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From the Editor's Desk

As the year draws to a close and year 2004 beckons, it is a time for reflections. In Charles Dickens' classic tale of human redemption, A Christmas Carol, the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and the Future takes Ebenezer Scrooge through his life, finally to bring about renewal, joy and hope.

College Mirror takes a leaf from its pages and attempts a look at the College Past, Present and Future.

College Past in **Down Heritage Trail** tells of the Singapore- Australian connection leading to the founding of the College of General Practitioners, Singapore in 1971.

College Present sees a growing pool of GPs committed to vocational training and continuing education. The recent **Convocation** ceremony saw more graduates of the Diploma and Masters programme as well as new Collegiate Members and Fellows

added to the fold. Formation of two **Special Interest Groups (SIGs)** - Mental Health and Elder Care in College is in line with the call to enhance the role of the GP.

College Future include the less explored yet important areas and challenges such as the **GP and Research**.

Taking an honest look at ourselves past, present and future, there can be renewed spirit and hope for a bright era for Family Medicine and ultimately for better patient care and health care in Singapore.

Finally, as Tiny Tim observed, "God bless us, Everyone!" A toast to blessed times with family and friends this season, good health and success in the New Year!



A Christmas Carol Online <http://www.stormfax.com/dickens.htm>

Ong Jin Ee

Dr Ong Jin Ee
Editor of The College Mirror



The 19th Council & Editorial Board wish all doctors & their families a Merry X'mas & a Happy New Year

