

Wide angle and zoom lens perspective of clinical practice

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

Dr Lee Suan Yew, President, Singapore Medical Council and past President of College drew a very appropriate analogy when describing the best practice of family medicine in an interview with the College Mirror.

He said "GPs/Family Physicians are best when they can use both lenses, that is, the wide angle lens and zoom lens. In other words, they are good in general medicine but can narrow down their interests in a particular field."

Applied to continuing medical education, the wide-angle perspective of medicine is best developed by participating in vocational training programmes like the Graduate Diploma and Master in Family Medicine. These wide-angled programmes cover the breath of medicine, honing knowledge and skills of other clinical disciplines in the context of

Family Practice and more importantly providing the glue that gel the aggregates together. The zoom-lens perspective can then be built on top of this infrastructure by participation in skills courses, ad-hoc CME events and specialized diplomas.

This is not just philosophical musing. No less than three senior members of the profession have come out publicly to endorse the value of broad-based FM vocational training (pg 4). They are practitioners, understanding what patients want and need.

They reiterate what Dr Lee advised in another part of the Mirror's interview and that is "For those who wish to be Family Physicians, it is certainly worth while for young doctors to take up the challenge of the various post-graduate courses conducted by the College".

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Editor's Words

School for the Family Physician

I did not plan it that way but medical school never quite ended for me.

With this issue's focus on life-long learning for the family physician, it has set me thinking of my own experience.

I reflect on what Adult learning has been for me. I started off as a fledgling MOH Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) trainee back in 1996. In the midst of rotating through various specialties in hospitals, there was a gradual appreciation of the discipline of Family Medicine(FM). One of my favourite text, McWhinney's Textbook of Family Medicine; it inspired me that Family Medicine is about patient-centric care that is primary, personal, continuing and comprehensive. The family is the basic unit and the consultation a cornerstone of family practice.

Then I moved to the domiciliary care arena, learning on-the-job to deal not only with patients but also caregivers in their homes.

I did not hear Dr Lee Suan Yew, President Singapore Medical Council and past President

College deliver the 15th Sreenivasan Oration, "Dare to Dream" in 1995. But as events often strangely turn out, I had answered his dare to sit for the MMed(FM) examination in 2000 and in an interview for this issue of the Mirror, revisited the Oration with Dr Lee himself.

It is 2004 and the journey does not end. I find myself enrolled in the FM Fellowship Programme. There will be the opportunity to grow with peers, to be guided by senior family physicians and to be stretched to learn new things.

Sir Denis Hill writing in "Psychiatry in Medicine, Retrospect and Prospect" said it well: "The family physician's role is a difficult one. If it is to be sustained and developed, the general practitioner must become the most educated - the most comprehensively educated of all the doctors in the health service".

School for the complete family physician truly never quite ends.


Dr Ong Jin Ee
Editor of The College Mirror



Thoughts, comments and contributions that is of interest to your fellow family physicians are welcome. Please address correspondence to: The Editor, Email : collegemirror@cfps.org.sg