

Health Promotion & Health Screening for the Elderly

By Dr Cheong Seng Kwing, FCFP

The third SIG family medicine grand round was held on the 3rd of August 2004.

Evidence based Screening

Dr. Ong Chin Fung, Senior Family Physician from SingHealth Polyclinic (Bedok) gave a talk on "Evidence Based Health Screening for the Elderly".

The target of geriatric assessment is actually a heterogenous group. This includes the younger, well elderly, for which preventive geriatrics is geared toward, and the older, frail elderly, who needed extensive assessment. She stressed that assessment instruments were to be used only as a guide, and must be interpreted in the context of their limitation. They are rarely diagnostic, but served more to indicate a need for further evaluation.

The conditions for screening into can be divided into three groups namely:

- 1) Common geriatric problems: nutrition, hearing, vision, mental status, urinary incontinence, depression, mobility,
- 2) Common medical condition in the elderly : diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, osteoporosis
- 3) Malignancy.

For each condition, she gave the audience the evidence for screening as well as the different tools that can be used. Dr Ong also gave tips on how to use time efficiently in the busy family physician clinic eg use brief assessment instruments, when appropriate, utilise non-physician personnel to perform standard geriatric assessments, and omitting parts of the physical examination that are likely to be low yield.

It's Great to be old

Dr Pang Weng Sun, Head and Senior Consultant from the Department of Geriatric Medicine, Alexandra Hospital, spoke on the interesting subject of "Health

Promotion and Ageing".

The components of successful ageing was the combination of 3 factors of avoiding disease and disability, maintaining high cognitive and physical function, and engagement with life.

He highlighted the benefits of exercise as well as of maintaining a balanced diet in the elderly. Dr Pang also stressed the need of maintaining a correct mindset and philosophy of "I am old, and it's great to be old", that is, a mentality of self-efficacy.

He stressed the recurring messages of a healthy lifestyle of exercise, diet, smoking cessation, early detection, management of disease and prevention of disability, a positive attitude towards ageing with an active engagement in life, and lifestyle and environmental modifications to facilitate active living in old age.

He concluded by giving Ten Tips for Healthy Aging.

Please note that the powerpoint presentation slides of the above is available on the SIG section of the College Website.

Mental Health Special Interest Group

"Heart-sink" patients:
Approaches & strategies in management

Date : Tuesday, 5th October 2004
Time : 5.15 pm to 6.45 pm
Venue : College Lecture Room

Synopsis: "There are patients in every practice who give the doctor and staff a feeling of 'heartsink' every time they consult" - Thomas O'Dowd 1988. 'Heart-sink' patients, or difficult patients or problematic patients, or health care abusers or patients with medically unexplained patients, or simply FON, are labels for a group of patients that somehow evoke unpleasant feelings among doctors & staff. However, this not infrequently encountered situation may transgress moral, professional and ethical issues. In addition, some of these patients may have hitherto undiagnosed psychological disorders. So what exactly sinks the heart – is it a problem of the patient, the medical condition, the relationship, or the doctor himself? And how can we approach this problem or survive the sink?

Chairperson: Dr Yvette Tan, Deputy Director, Hougang Polyclinic

Presenter: Dr Liow Pei Hsiang is a consultant psychiatrist at Alexandra Hospital. While she has interests in eating disorders, she encounters in liaison psychiatry, many of the potentially 'difficult' scenarios such as in diabetic care, obesity management, ill-defined gastro-intestinal syndromes, or pain syndromes, some not unlike those encountered in general practice.

Elder Care Special Interest Group

"Clinic and Home Assessment of the Elderly"

Date : Tuesday, 2nd November 2004
Time : 5.15 pm to 6.45 pm
Venue : College Lecture Room

Synopsis: The clinic and home evaluation of the elderly is an art as well as a science. It is challenging as time is an essence in a busy clinic session. The session will explore ways we can maximise the consult time as well as look at the essential areas in the assessment of the elderly.

Chairman: Dr Gerald Koh, Family Physician and Fellow of the College, Ang Mo Kio Hospital.

Presenters: Clinic Dr Ding Yew Yong / Dr Ong Jin Ee

Dr YY Ding, Senior Consultant Geriatrician & Head, Geriatric Medicine Department, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, will share his experience in clinic assessment of the older person. Dr Ding is known for his systematic approach in geriatric evaluation. TTSH geriatric department is also renowned for their comprehensive geriatric assessment clinics. Dr Ong Jin Ee is Collegiate member of the college & a home care physician. She has extensive experience in the care of the elderly at home working with Touch Home care. She is actively involved in training medical students, postgraduate diploma in geriatric medicine trainees as well as family medicine trainees in the area of home care. She will present an approach to the evaluation of the older person at home.