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Translating Preaching into Practice

"Competency, relevance, being up to date, credibility, and practising what we preach". Are these just words and phrases, or do they describe us and our practice? Soul searching, making adjustment, undergoing overhaul or just carrying on the status quo, are some of the possible outcomes that each one of us, trainees and teachers alike, may experience after attending this year's Commencement Ceremony. It will be wonderful if a positive response that jumpstarts the engine of our medical profession would be the result of this encounter.

Professor John Wong, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, National University of Singapore, in his opening address on 26 June 2004, touched on these attributes, and the issue of medical knowledge based on evidence, that we must live by, as caring family physicians serving Singapore's present and future healthcare needs. The following is the full text of his speech.



Prof John Wong, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, National University of Singapore

"I am deeply honored to be with you at the commencement of the Family Medicine Academic Year. I congratulate all of you, especially those of you who are embarking on postgraduate training programs, and would like to thank those of you who are involved in teaching these programs. One of the most noble aspects of our profession is the passing of skills and knowledge from one to another.

Yet medical education is more than just reading text. It must be relevant to our needs, and something which we can apply to our daily patient care. Relevance and thus credibility of those who teach, and what they teach, is crucial for the success of education.

However I would like to touch on an aspect of

I am not here to preach to the converted. All of us understand and appreciate the importance of continual learning.

"We must not only ensure that we are educated, but relevant to Singapore's needs. We must ensure that what we preach, is practiced, not only by ourselves, but by all those involved in health care, and by our population."

- Prof John Wong

How else can we look our patients in the eyes and tell them that what we are recommending is in the best of their interests if we are not aware of what is current state-of-the-art?

medical education which is often forgotten, that is, do we actually practice what we preach?

How else can we win the respect of our colleagues, peers, and juniors, if we do not know as much as they do? How can we call ourselves teachers if we are not aware of what has been proven, repudiated, and at what level of evidence?

There are 3 excellent papers, published in the New England Journal of Medicine last year and this year, one from the RAND Corporation, entitled "The Quality of Health Care Delivered to Adults in the United States", another being the Shattuck Lecture, entitled "Clinical Research to Clinical Practice - Lost in Translation?", and the third being

College Family Medicine Convocation 2004
30 Oct 2004

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College Art Gallery



"Two in a Boat" by Tay Bak Koi
From College Art Collection

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Commencement of FM Academic Year 2004

By Dr Wee Chee Chau, MCFP

The more motivated amongst us, who committed themselves for further medical education by going back to 'school' were gathered at the Ministry of Health Auditorium on 26 June 2004 for their Commencement Ceremony.

Professor John Wong, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, was the Guest-of-Honour, (refer to front pg for full-text). Prof Wong provided the extra "push " to help the trainees begin their journey of learning reminding them that acquiring knowledge for its sake is not the only purpose for their endeavors, but to be able to "practice what they preach", should also be high on their agenda.

An overview of the year's academic programme was presented by A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, the College's Censor-in-Chief, providing the road map for the year's journey. He also launched the MCFP by Assessment for some of the GDFM graduates who had decided to become Collegiate members, at the same time giving them a glimpse of what is lined up for them in the next one and a half years.

Teachers were not forgotten as eighteen of them were awarded the Teachers' Award 2004 for their role in the GDFM programme. Their acknowledgement serves to inspire all present, as well as to motivate those that may wish to contribute

to the College as teachers after their graduation.

The ceremony was closed with the appointment of the FM CME Advisors for 2004-2006.

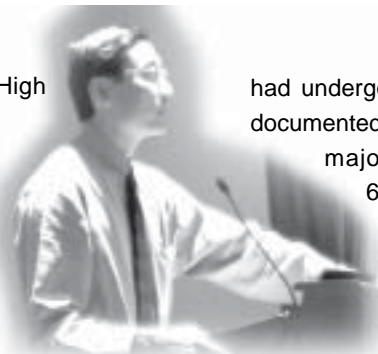


Commencement Ceremony 2004 held at MOH Auditorium.

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"Paying Physicians for High Quality Care".

These papers are part of several done to look into why after US\$250 billion of NIH funding alone, the US life expectancy is only 22nd in the world, lagging behind Japan, Israel, Canada, and Western Europe.



Prof Wong delivering opening address

had undergone coronary angioplasty for documented coronary artery disease at a major medical center was only 60% in 1995. 47% of hypertensives were compliant with their medication.

What about education? Only 42% of obese patients had been advised by their doctors to lose weight, and only 34% had been counseled about exercise after a routine doctor's appointment.

How can we fix this? Reimbursement for quality is one of them. Reimbursement for primary care doctors in the UK, the Partners Healthcare Group in Boston, and the Integrated Healthcare Association of California are now based on defined quality indicators.

What is the status of healthcare of adults in Singapore? I would not be surprised if many of our fellow citizens are not getting standard recommended treatment. Can we be proud that we prescribe expensive antibiotics for pneumonia when the

majority of our population over 65, and those with underlying diabetes, renal, liver, and hematologic disease, congestive heart failure, and chronic obstructive lung disease are not vaccinated against pneumococcus?

I would like to end by paraphrasing Thomas Chambers's Goulstonian Lecture in 1850 : Knowledge, however good and lovely, be it for its own sake, must always be considered a step. We should review our research and deduce



Prof Wong with College Council Members at Commencement 2004

rules of practice, for the refreshment of mankind.

We must not only ensure that we are educated, but relevant to Singapore's needs. We must ensure that what we preach, is practiced, not only by ourselves, but by all those involved in health care, and by our population."