

Defining a Standard for Primary Care Practice in Singapore

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The need to define a standard for primary care practice in Singapore has gathered momentum over the last few years and in particular in recent months. This is in tune with the quality and patient safety movement worldwide. The initiative to consider a national standard for primary care started five years ago when in May 1999, a decision was made at the College Annual General Meeting (AGM) to develop a graduate diploma (GDFM) based on the syllabus used in the Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) programme which had been in use since 1990.

This concept of a standard of practice for primary care was tabled to the Family Medicine Committee, which is made up of representatives of the Ministry of Health, the University, the College and service providers in both the public and private sector. The Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM) was the outcome of the deliberations.

The GDFM was started as a pilot programme in the national endeavour to train doctors to be able to practise at an enhanced level of primary care in keeping with current standards of family medicine practice around the world. The University conducts the examination and awards a Graduate Diploma for successful completion and passing the

examination. The College was given the responsibility of training the doctors who registered for this programme.

A memorandum that the GDFM be adopted as the general standard for primary care practice was submitted to the Ministry of Health following several dialogues with the stakeholders in primary care. This was made public in the FM Convocation held on October 30 this year and it was also reported as a front page news in *The Straits Times* two days later.

The syllabus and training programmes in the current GDFM relate to the national health care agenda. The GDFM examination itself is also aligned to meeting the healthcare needs of the Nation. Common conditions as well as rare but not to be missed conditions are the staple of the cases used for testing.

The College is now in the process of gathering feedback on the implementation details and fine-tuning the syllabus and training to meet national needs. An FAQ on the GDFM is on page 5. The College looks forward to your feedback on how we could use the GDFM to set the practice benchmark for primary care doctors in Singapore.

Editor's Words

Setting in Order

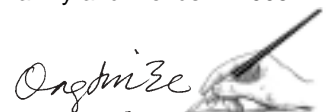
It is Christmas time again. Just as two thousand years ago there was a star that appeared in the East directing the Magi to the Christ child, so it is that Family Medicine is looking for its guiding star to take it to the future. There is uncertainty in reformation and transition but it should be for the good - to set the FM house in the right order & build capacity for the betterment of our patients.

This issue we highlight vocational training for the GP - the GDFM as a minimum standard akan dating? (Pages 1 & 5). On page 20, a solo GP shares his dilemma in "*Reflections of a Solo GP*". There are important lessons also to learn about the plight of the GP from the movie, *Titanic* (Page 16). College Mirror also interviewed "*A Few Good Men and Women*" who have just exited their Fellowship at the Convocation '04 (Page 10).

The reformation of family medicine is not peculiar to Singapore. The Practice & Quality SIG of College invited two overseas speakers to share with us the Australian and Scottish experience in developing quality care in family practice (Page 14).

In business as usual, our SIG chairmen round up the year (Page 6). Practice Corner features a new bite size series on Family Medicine research (Page 19). Get in the act for those so inclined.

We thank all our contributors and wish good health and peace to all our family and friends in 2005!



Dr Ong Jin Ee
Editor of The College Mirror