

# The Light at the End of the Tunnel!

## College Convocation Ceremony

by Dr Low Sher Guan Luke, FCFP(S), Editor

28th November 2015 – a day which many proud graduands will remember for years to come. Finally all their hard work has paid off, and it is time to rejoice and celebrate! As I walked around the foyer outside Fort and Mountbatten room, I was overwhelmed by the many happy faces, warm handshakes and loud laughter that reflected the joyous atmosphere. Many of them gathered with their friends... or shall I say comrade-in-arms, posing for group photos with their triumphant thumbs-up. Cameras snapping, flashes firing off, clanking of glasses against each other in hearty toasts. Scenes like these do not happen often in college, but just once a year. Perhaps that is enough. Such an annual tradition constantly reminds us to applaud the brave ones who have taken the right step towards higher training and education. It is also a significant milestone occasion for my family and I, who have turned up to support my brother Dr Low Lian Leng, one of the graduands from his fellowship course.

All of us streamed into the ballroom and eagerly waited for the event to commence. I was back stage, preparing my work as master of ceremony. Several years ago, I was grimly reminded by a friend who related the story of a parade commander who miscalculated the number of shots fired during the parade and was demoted shortly after. "Yes, please do not screw up", I told myself backstage.

The event commenced on a high note with the academic procession marching in, accompanying our Guest of Honour Dr Lam Pin Min, Minister of State for Health. In my feeble attempt to inspire the graduands and tying back to the familiar exams they just survived, I spoke about making the simple but important dichotomy choices in life, the similarities with the patient's neurological examination and the major assessments of the sensory system, motor system and the higher executive functions. "Pain or Pleasure" for the sensory system, "Apply or Abort" for the motor system, and "Serpent-hood or Servant-hood" for



*Pain or Pleasure? Apply or Abort? Serpent-hood or Servant-hood?*

the higher executive system. I have little doubt in my mind that our wise graduands will incline their choices in life towards **painful learning instead of pleasurable conceit, application of knowledge and skills instead of abortion of ideas, and living a life of servant-hood leadership instead of selfish serpent-hood.**

College President Associate Professor Lee Kheng Hock also spoke about the need for higher training, especially given the shifting needs of an aging population towards chronic disease management and care for our patients who may be homebound. To achieve this, family physicians must not be content to deal with simple medical conditions, but be trained to manage patients with complex conditions in their own homes and community.

Our Guest of Honour Dr Lam Pin Min commended the efforts of family physicians in playing an important role in delivering care to our population. This is also made more affordable with the introduction of the Community Health Assist Scheme, Pioneer Generation package and expanded Chronic Disease Management Program so that patients may stick to their same family doctor for many of their encounters and fulfilling the long term goal of "One Singaporean, One Family Doctor". The training of family doctors into competent Family Physicians will position us well in the upcoming care transformation that our aging population requires, to deliver person-centric care with a greater focus on care continuity and integration. Such a generation of Family Physicians will work not only in the primary care sector, but also

in the community hospitals, to help patients transit from acute inpatient care, through the rehabilitative phase, before returning safely back into their homes and the community.

Professor Chew Chin Hin delivered the Sreenivasan Oration and spoke of the evolution of medicine in Singapore, from its early dawn years to where we are now. The contents of the oration is published separately in another section of this issue. In recognition of his enormous

contributions towards our college, he was also conferred the College Honorary Membership by Professor Lee.

Dr Julian Lim then hosted the section on the inauguration of College Programme for MMed(FM) and Collegiate membership. This handing over of the framed 3 articles also signifies the end of its wandering days to find the promised land, finally and naturally with the College. This is further articulated in Julian's speech.

Our Censor-in-Chief Dr Paul Goh subsequently presided over the conferment ceremony for our graduands, accompanied by thunderous claps and cheers, signifying the celebration that comes with the light at the end of the tunnel! The recipients consisted of 8 fellows, 14 collegiate members, 30 MMed(FM) and 67 GDFM graduands. The night ended with dinner where congratulations and war stories were exchanged over hearty meals and drinks.

Is it over? For the event, yes. But for many of the graduands, it is time to embark on a new journey... their own unique adventure to be filled with mixed tales of hardship, challenges, glory, comradeship, and hopefully culminating in triumphant victory as they push the frontiers of family medicine wherever they are! No one ever said it is going to be easy, but if we do not do it, then who will? Think not of what others can do for you, but what you can do for others... lead a life of servant-hood leadership!

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