

# Live Radio Interview with Capital 958 FM on Family Medicine training in Singapore

by Dr Low Lian Leng, Council Member, College of Family Physicians Singapore

**O**n 27th November, College President Associate Professor Lee Kheng Hock and Dr Low Lian Leng attended a live radio interview with Capital 95.8 FM, a popular Chinese infotainment station on its morning talk show. The interview was hosted by Mr Phua Kia Peow and covered on the need for more family physicians with family medicine training to support Singapore's aging population and changing healthcare needs in the primary, intermediate and long term care (ILTC) sectors. The following are some key take-away from their interview.

Professor Lee started by sharing that since its inauguration in 1971, the College has been advocating for post-graduate training for family physicians, culminating in formation of the Masters of Medicine (Family Medicine) program in 1993, followed by the Graduate Diploma in Family medicine and the Fellowship of the College of Family Physicians. The programs have nurtured many batches of well-trained family physicians. Professor Lee also highlighted the importance of ongoing training for family physicians to upgrade their competencies to manage the increasingly complex patient care needs in our aging population. Older family physicians can also enroll in College programs if they had missed out on formal training programs before its formation.

Dr Low added that today's family physicians will play a major role in the healthcare system as they are versatile to work in many settings including acute interface, ILTC and home care. The family medicine training programs are rigorous to prepare the family



Capital 95.8FM morning talk show host Mr Phua Kia Peow finds out more about Family Medicine from Dr Low Lian Leng (middle) and Prof Lee Kheng Hock (right).

Image courtesy of Dr Low Lian Leng

physician to function as "One discipline, many settings" and fulfill the full potential of family medicine in these diverse settings. The holistic training is what motivated him to do the Masters followed by the College fellowship program.

To meet the needs of the aging population with increasingly complex care needs, Professor Lee emphasized that today's family physicians are required to be well-trained to prioritize their patients' multiple problems. Patients can be taken

care of by family physicians starting from the post-acute phase and continuing the care in the step-down setting before transition to the community family physician. The rigorous training family physicians receive will allow them to appreciate the impact of the illness at different transition points of the healthcare continuum and understand the interaction between multiple disease complications and individualize management plans appropriately. The longitudinal relationship built by caring for patients from cradle to grave is beneficial for the family physician to apply the context and provide patient-centered care.

Finally, Dr Low gave an example of how the additional training has benefitted him in his work. He pointed out that many family physicians now play an important role in caring for the chronically sick and home-bound patients in home care as they are unable to return for hospital follow up. The additional fellowship training benefitted him to lead his multi-disciplinary home care team competently and prevent unnecessary readmissions and emergency department visits for his patients.

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## 1<sup>st</sup> SSO-NCCS Geriatric Oncology Workshop - 10<sup>th</sup> Oct 2015

by Dr Ravindran Kanesvaran, Consultant, Division of Medical Oncology, National Cancer Centre Singapore

The Singapore Society of Oncology (SSO) together with the support of the Department of Cancer Education of the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) had organised a workshop on Basic principles of Geriatric Oncology for family medicine specialists recently. Geriatric oncology is a fairly new field that has come to prominence of late with the realisation that elderly cancer patients should be treated differently from younger cancer patients in view of the various factors from biology to psychology that changes with aging. Elderly cancer patients (defined as those aged more than 65 years old) consist of 60% of all cancer patients, hence forming a large of cancer patients with unique needs.

Geriatric Oncology is a field that is fairly well developed in USA and some European countries but still in its infancy in Asia. NCCS has the only geriatric oncology program in the region and it

was initiated in 2007. Currently it is a clinical service provided to selected cancer patients who are older than 70 years old presenting at NCCS.

The Singapore Society of Oncology, through its President, Dr Ravindran Kanesvaran, had applied for the "International Neighbour of Choice (INOC)" grant from MSD Philanthropy for 2015 and was successful in its application for funding to conduct 3 geriatric oncology workshops. The first of the workshops was the one conducted on October 10th 2015. It was held at the NCCS Auditorium from 12pm to 5pm.

The objective of this workshop was expose family medicine specialists and general practitioners to the fundamental concepts

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