

HERALDRY AND REGALIA OF THE COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS SINGAPORE

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ABSTRACT

The College of Family Physicians Singapore has inherited a unique set of regalia over the past 35 years. Its corporate identity is embodied in the College Crest with its motto and coat of arms. There are also regalia used in formal occasions, such as academic gowns, medallions of office, the Convocation Tapestry and paraphernalia featuring the Academic Crest. Academic insignia are awarded to family physicians who have undergone structured training in family medicine. These were first awarded by the College in the 2003 Convocation Ceremony to recognise academic achievements and encourage participation in structured vocational training. The respective attainments are distinguished by the colour of the badges' border viz those with GDFM or its equivalent (blue border), Collegiate Member (green border) and Fellows (red border). These distinctive colours are also used in the official display frames for the respective College diplomas awarded.

Keywords: heraldry, regalia, crest, College of Family Physicians Singapore

INTRODUCTION

Heraldry is the art of displaying designs and ornaments in the form of a shield, seal, flag or emblem. In medieval times, symbols were painted on the shields of armour-clad knights and on flags to help them distinguish friend from foe in battle. They are also used in fine decorative clothing, insignia, seals and other ceremonial paraphernalia, collectively known as regalia. These symbols help to unite people for a cause as well as provide a sense of belonging to a certain family, group or institution.

Since its inception in 1971, the College has developed a unique set of regalia in keeping with its mission as a professional and academic institution. The regalia encompass the College Crest and the Academic Crest, academic gowns, medallions of office, insignia, and the latest addition, the Convocation Tapestry.

ACADEMIC AND COLLEGE CREST

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RCAGP) assisted in the formation of the College of Family Physicians Singapore (The College) and its academic activities in the early years. It is therefore not surprising that the College adopted the common motto of these two august institutions: 'Cum Scientia Caritas' which signifies scientific knowledge applied with compassion.

The emblem¹ as prescribed by the founding fathers and enshrined in its constitution is "a heraldic lion in gold on a red chief above a silver shield and green cross, on which the caduceus and an open book is mounted". The lion represents Singapore. Red is the colour of blood, on which life depends, and which is our mission to save. The green cross symbolises the humanitarian mission of the College. White is the colour of purity, which is our aim. The caduceus is the recognized symbol for the art of healing, and the open book represents knowledge and continued learning.

In 1971, in the design of the Academic Crest (Figure 1), Dr Koh Eng Soo incorporated these elements of the emblem and the motto was inscribed on a ceremonial belt surrounding the emblem. The Academic Crest of the College was first used in 1973 as a badge of office on the left sleeve of the President's academic gown. In the more recent years, it was employed in banners and backdrops for official photos during the College Convocation.



Figure 1.
Original Painting of
Academic Crest, 1971

The earlier drawing of the crest evolved into the College Crest design (Figure 2), which has the motto inscribed on a banner at the bottom of the emblem.



Figure 2.
Original Painting of
the College Crest, 1971

The first known large rendition is the 'Copper Tooling Crest' (Figure 3). This crest first made its appearance in the group picture of the 3rd Council (1973-1974) taken in the Council Room of the previous College office at the old alumni building. The 'Copper Tooling Crest' is now displayed in the College Lecture Room.

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Figure 3. Copper Tooling Crest, 1973

The College Crest was also woven onto small woollen carpets. In 1972, Dr Sreenivasan, the first president of the College, presented such a carpet to Dr Richard Geeves and Dr Wes Fabb, then Censors of the RACGP and external examiners to the first MCGP examination. When A/Profs Goh Lee Gan and Cheong Pak Yean visited Dr Geeves in Tasmania in 2003, he proudly showed them the memento (Figure 4) given by the College two decades ago².



Figure 4. Carpet (circa 1972), Dr Geeves & A/Prof Goh

Three large crests in full colours were commissioned in 1987 by the 10th Council for its present premises at the College of Medicine Building. They now take pride of place in the Council Room (Figure 5), the lobby, and above the imposing wooden doors of the College.



Figure 5.
The College Crest in the
Council Room, 1987

ACADEMIC DRESS AND INSIGNIA

Academic gowns were worn in the Convocation Ceremony of 1972 when the Diplomate membership (MCGP) was first awarded. The academic dress³ (Figure 6) is a dark blue gown, differentiated by the coloured trimmings for the collar facings and sleeves for different categories of members as governed by the by-laws of the College Constitution.



Figure 6.
Academic Dress -
Dr Wong Heck Sing
in President's Gown, 1975

It was felt that doctors who received structured FM training should also be recognised in their practices. The College first awarded the Academic Insignia⁴ (Figure 7) in the 2003 Convocation Ceremony to recognise academic achievements and encourage participation



Figure 7. Academic Insignia of Membership, 2003

in structured vocational training. The respective attainments are distinguished by the colour of the badges' border viz those with GDFM or its equivalent (blue border), Collegiate Member (green border) and Fellows (red border). These distinctive colours are also used in the official display frames for the respective College diplomas awarded. The insignia and frames were designed by Dr Lee Kheng Hock and A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean.

MEDALLIONS OF OFFICE

The three jewelled medallions (Figure 8) for the Office of the President (gold ribbon), Vice-President (blue ribbon) and Censor-in-Chief of the College (maroon ribbon) were commissioned by the 5th Council (1975-1977). The College Crest was painted and fired in fine porcelain as the centrepiece of the medallion. These medallions were minted in the United Kingdom by the firm, Toye Kenning & Spencer



Figure 8. Medallions of Office, 1975

Ltd of London. The firm is still commissioned by Royal Appointment as the supplier of gold and silver laces, insignia and embroidery to the Queen.

The medallions were presented to the College by Roche, the pharmaceutical company. Roche had set up office in Singapore in 1973. A picture of College President, Dr Wong Heck Sing, receiving a cheque for the medallions from Mr Koh Choon Hui, then General Manager of Roche Singapore, appeared in the *Singapore Family Physician* in 1975⁵.

CONVOCATION TAPESTRY

In 2001, the College leadership felt that there was an urgent need to set up a formal training body, the Institute of Family Medicine, to continue to develop and deliver quality training programmes. This initiative was supported by many stalwarts of the FM fraternity. Dr Wong Heck Sing (past College president, who also served as chairman of the protem committee that formed the College in 1971) accepted the stewardship of a development group comprising the present ex-co and past presidents. Dr Wong immediately gave a donation of \$10,000 to start a development fund.

The College leadership was greatly inspired by Dr Wong's commitment to the College. With determination and hard work, the Institute of Family Medicine was established. The 20th College Council felt that Dr Wong's love for the College and its mission should be remembered by future generations of family physicians. It obtained Dr Wong's permission to utilise the \$10,000 donation for the commissioning of the College Convocation Tapestry. A committee comprising Dr Arthur Tan, Dr Lily Aw and A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, oversaw the tapestry production.

The Convocation Tapestry (Figure 9) was unveiled on 1st Oct 2005 by the Director of Medical Services, Prof K. Satkunanantham, during the 2005 Convocation Ceremony. The design of the tapestry followed closely the original painting of the Academic Crest with the addition of the words 'The College Convocation Tapestry' and 'College of Family Physicians Singapore'. The hand-woven piled tapestry was woven in Tabriz,

north-west Iran, the centre of the Persian rug trade. It was woven using wool and silk threads on a base of silk and measures 1.45m by 1m. It is now on permanent display at the Anteroom of the College with other College regalia, except when taken out for formal use in convocation ceremonies.



Figure 9. Convocation Tapestry, 2005

CONCLUSIONS

The College as a professional and academic institution has grown in stature and relevance in the past 35 years. The heraldry and regalia have also evolved in tandem and embody the aspiration and contributions of generations of College leaders and members towards the College Mission, as promulgated by the founding fathers in the College Constitution. No doubt, future generations would add to the tradition. A ceremonial mace to be used in Conferment ceremonies may be developed in years to come.

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