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diseases and offering timely advice from screening to prophylactic vaccinations. He is also the patient's navigator across our complex healthcare system, providing appropriate referrals as well as coordinating care within the community. The family physician thus is instrumental in the provision of good and affordable care to every Singaporean, to help them age and live well in the community.

Medicine has become more complex since I graduated from medical school. Many years ago, the medical training of 5 years and a year of housemanship provided sufficient knowledge and skills to function as a general practitioner. Many of my classmates became successful GPs and became pillars of our community. The 5-year medical curriculum today provides the basis for further medical training, and it is now challenging for a fresh medical graduate to have the necessary skills and knowledge to be a good family physician without further training.

I would like to acknowledge the immense contributions of the College of Family Physicians Singapore, in promoting the values and ideals of family medicine for the last 45 years. The College has been in the forefront of providing training to up skill our medical

graduates to cater to the evolving needs of our community. The College has been a valuable partner of the NUS in the setup of the Graduate Diploma of Family Medicine as well as the MMed Family Medicine programmes. Many of the graduates are leaders today in our healthcare system, and many have contributed by teaching and mentorship of our future leaders in Family Medicine.

Let me end by commending those who have taken this journey to up skill your competencies in Family Medicine. It is a challenging journey, as you have to juggle work with learning. Sacrifices will have to be made. The endpoint will certainly be worthwhile, as you become a very valuable member of the family medicine and healthcare community. I would like to also commend the teachers, who also despite having to juggle work and teaching have contributed so selflessly to the training programmes. It is individuals like you, in the tradition of the College of Family Medicine Singapore, who have made Family Medicine a very respected speciality of Medicine.

Thank you.

■ CM

Our CFPS Academic Programmes - Advancing Family Medicine through academia

by Dr Chan Hian Hui Vincent, FCFP(S), Council Member, College of Family Physicians Singapore

Family Medicine in Singapore has come a long way, since the founding of our College in 1971. The charter of our College has always been to bring greater recognition and prestige to our fraternity. The academic programmes available today, did not exist back then. Rather they were designed and created by our visionary and energetic College Pioneers. Through these programmes, we are gradually creating a strong cadre of highly trained Family Medicine specialists, physicians with the knowledge and standing, who can hold our own against that of other medical specialists.

Our programmes today are well established, and widely recognised both locally and internationally. Long forgotten in distant memory, was the saga where a few externals tried to remove our MCGP(S) designation from the Singapore Medical Council's list of displayable

qualifications, citing disdain for our programme then. This is why we must all realise that the prestige of our displayable Family Medicine titles is intrinsically linked to the strength of our College and her academic programmes. Thus, for those of us who have passed, do return to help improve and advance our programmes, so that the public, government and other colleagues have no doubt about the quality of our programmes.

With this, let me introduce our 3 main College Academic programmes:

1. Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM) course
2. Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) College Programme
3. Family Medicine Fellowship Programme

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Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM) course

This programme was first mooted by A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, and was started in the year 2000. The GDFM course is designed to equip trainees with the minimum vocational skills for independent family practice. It is a rigorous 2-year course, comprising 8 quarterly modules, including distance learning and workshops, with 5 skills courses and 8 small group tutorials. Successful graduates from the course, can register with the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) and display their GDFM title. The Ministry of Health and SMC also recognize this designation for entry into the Register of Family Physicians. The GDFM is therefore the minimum requirement to qualify as a Family Physician in Singapore.

Master of Medicine (Family Medicine), College Programme

The M.Med (Family Medicine) College Programme, was started in 1993, though the foundation for this was laid much earlier by Dr Lee Suan Yew and A/Prof Goh Lee Gan. Prior to 2011 when the Family Medicine Residency took over Programme A, this course was known as "Programme B." This course continues today as the "College Programme" giving post-government bond doctors the option to further their training. This programme seeks to equip trainees with skills and knowledge beyond the needs of a competent Family Physician, and is pegged at specialist level. Trainees are also taught on how to be clinical leaders to other junior doctors. Presently, the M.Med (Family Medicine) qualification is being accepted as a de facto specialist degree in our local healthcare institutions, and there is increasing recognition by other overseas institutions.

Family Medicine Fellowship Programme (FMFP)

The FMFP was first started in 1998, and represents the pinnacle

of training for Family Physicians in Singapore. It is the equivalent exit qualification for our specialty. The programme is a rigorous 2-year programme covering various aspects of Family Medicine such as clinical course work, bio-medical ethics, teaching and research. The objective being to provide advanced training in Family Medicine to Family Physicians who at the end of the process should become an expert clinician, leader, teacher and scholar. Currently, the FCFP(S) designation is a requirement for promotion to senior grades by many institutions. FCFP(S) is also recognised by the Academy of Medicine Singapore, and holders of this qualification can be admitted as Fellows of the Academy, just like all other specialists. Even if you were in private general practice in the heartlands, attaining the FCFP(S) is still a good measure of personal professional satisfaction.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, every General Practitioner – Family Physician matters. As more and more of us become higher and highly qualified, we would gain greater and greater public trust and regard from other specialist colleagues. This trust would also extend to the government and our key partners in the Ministry of Health. Indeed, I can tell all that MOH wonders if the entire body of GPs are sufficiently well trained to take on chronic care, as I understand from the sub-committee College has sent me to. One answer to this is for us all, including us in the heartland GP clinics, to be highly trained. In that way, our policy makers can have better ease of mind, when they deploy tax payers' monies to help us care for our patients better. And of course, that personal satisfaction that I (we) have completed all the required Family Medicine training. Do discern your call, and consider signing up to one of these programmes next year.

■ CM

Perm Secretary visits CFPS

by Dr Chan Hian Hui Vincent, FCFP(S), Council Member, College of Family Physicians Singapore
Dr Low Sher Guan Luke, FCFP(S), Council Member, Editor, College of Family Physicians Singapore

Signalling his keen interest to understand the Family Medicine scene in Singapore, Mr Chan Heng Kee (the new Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Health) visited our College of Family Physicians Singapore on 18 August 2016. He was warmly received by our council, led by A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock and Vice-President Dr Tan Tze Lee. Members of council representing our Family Medicine fraternity across the various healthcare settings were also present.

The visit began as Mr Chan signed our guest book after a short tour of our premises. A/Prof Lee then gave an introduction into the history of our College, from its founding in 1971, to the development of her various academic programmes and the hosting of 2 WONCA World Conferences in 1983 and 2007, among other achievements.



Mr Chan Heng Kee, new MOH Permanent Secretary, signing our guest book. He was accompanied by Dr Elaine Tan (fifth from right), Head of the MOH Primary and Community Care division.

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