

Infectious inspiration

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

The word "infectious" conjures up negative images and connotations. We see it in our practices all the time, and many of our patients come with infections that we try our best to treat. However, not all infections are bad. When I was a young boy, my mum used to tell me to go for "chickenpox parties" and get infected. The rationale is that if I catch the chickenpox virus as a boy, the clinical manifestations and complications are not as severe as an adult and I will develop immunity in the process. So I did go for my chickenpox party when I was in Secondary 2, and lo and behold to no one's surprise, I came down with chickenpox, recovered from it, and am now stronger and immune against varicella.

There has been a spread of infection in the college... an infection of inspiration. It is something very subtle, but is started by our pioneers and forefathers which included current and past Presidents, council members and members of the College who have led the good and inspiring example, and young Turks who have also modelled after them. These young Turks include Bangyu, June, Nelson and Rose and many more names too numerous to mention. Day after day as I teach and work alongside them, I see how they have grown from being trainees themselves, to now being dedicated tutors who are so responsive to the trainees' needs and questions. I know for certain that our next generation of good tutors are rising up to the challenge and taking up the teaching baton! These folks never fail to amaze me how they can set aside time to guide their trainees despite having busy work schedules or having the heavy duties of a working mummy. I always tell the trainees that they are very lucky to have inherited such tutors because it is a thankless job that demands so much and offers little in return, except for the safe passage through rough training and rigorous exams, culminating in happy smiles during convocation, all of which are beautifully captured on photos on 18th November 2017 evening at NUSS Guild House. These are due payments for the tutors who gave their best to the trainees and their efforts have finally paid off!

The results for the MMed (FM) exams were released really close this year on 17th November 2017, just 1 day before the convocation dinner. There were some surprises, of course. The college programme for the MMed (FM) training has traditionally aimed to "Leave no men and women behind" and given hope to countless doctors who have somehow not gone through

the residency programme for various reasons. Many can attest to the benefit of being accepted and having completed the training, to become better family physicians themselves, wherever they may be practicing. Giving almost everybody a chance also means almost not discriminating against anyone, and substrate selection is not a luxury that the College MMed (FM) programme indulges in. We take whatever is given to us, try our best to mould however we can and not throw anyone out of the window if possible. The end results in some years are encouraging, and other years less so because of the vast differences in trainees taken in. But we stand strong in our belief that College leaves no one behind so everybody gets a second chance. Even though the second chance is given, it is still an uphill task for the trainee to brush up his skills and prove himself worthy of passing the rigorous exams and earning the MMed (FM) title.

It is said "Aspiring doctors should pursue family medicine as a career". College is of course responding to the call to increase the training pipeline alongside other residency programmes as well as relooking at the current training programmes to make it more relevant. Family medicine, just like internal medicine, geriatric medicine and rehabilitation medicine, are the more generalist disciplines. The latter 3 are considered specialists and not the former. I can see why aspiring doctors, when given the choice of the 4 generalist disciplines, may gravitate to those which confers them as specialists upon completion of the training. On the ground, it can be a real challenge to sell family medicine as a training programme to these aspiring doctors when it is not considered on par with the other specialist generalist disciplines.

The College Mirror is also undergoing a revamp. We are going to have more teams for College Mirror, and with that, new sub-editors and members whom I'm sure will inject new life and ideas into the publication. We will have more details on this coming in 2018. I also wish to take this chance to welcome Dr Tan Eng Chun onboard our College Mirror editorial board. Dr Tan is a good friend of mine whom I have known for the past 5 years, also from the MMed (FM) college programme who has passed the rigorous exams and have come back to teach and write! It is kudos to this thankful spirit in many of us that really makes up the College work.

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EXTENDED CONSULTATION

Published by the **College of Family Physicians Singapore**
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16 College Road #01-02, Singapore 169854
Tel: (65) 6223 0606 Fax: (65) 6222 0204
GST Registration Number: M90367025C
E-mail: information@cfps.org.sg
MCI (P) 120/09/2017

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(continued from Cover Page: Interview with Dr Lai Yi Rong)

CM:
How is the family now?

YR:
Brandon was sent to the hospital, where he recovered well. He was discharged after 2 days. The mother mentioned that he was quite well when he reached the hospital but the doctors wanted to admit him for observation.

CM:
What are your thoughts or lessons you would like to share with our fellow colleagues from this experience?

YR:
I like the fact that one of the newspaper article mentioned that Family Physicians are not just "cough and cold doctors". My post graduate training, through the GDFM followed by MMed (FM), has sharpened my clinical skills and prepared me to handle this emergency situation and other complex clinical cases. As Family Physicians, we provide comprehensive, continual and holistic care for our patients, even those with complex care issues. This requires extensive clinical knowledge, and integrating skills from various disciplines. These are skills sets unique to the family physicians that no one clinical discipline possesses.

Patients of today have increasingly complex medical issues and as Family Physicians, we have to continuously upgrade and acquired other clinical skills. I thus took up Graduate Diploma in Palliative Medicine after my MMed (FM). Currently, I am providing Home Care Services for a Non-Profit Organisation to various patients that require palliative and homecare medical services during my non clinic days.

CM

(continued from Page 2: Infectious inspiration)

Lastly, College can never be what it is today if not for our diligent secretariat staff, who are the unsung heroes at the end of the day. We wish to make special mention in this issue for Miss Jennifer Lau, who has tirelessly worked for College and earned her prestigious 10-year long service award! We hope that our secretariat will grow from strength to strength and continue their good work for the College!

Yes, the infectious inspiration is spreading slowly but surely in our College, amongst her tutors, sub-editors and secretariat. This is one infection that is good and needs no prescription to treat.

CM