

**Programme Director (PD),
Dr Surajkumar (SK):**

The MMed(FM) College Programme has gone through some refinements this past year and has now been extended to 16 months. This was based on the feedback that the previous courses were crammed and too tight. The extension period will comprise more practice and mock sessions to help the trainees better prepare for the exams. We will be reviewing the effect of these changes and make further adjustments along the way based on the result of the MMed examinations.

CM:

What has been done well and which are the areas for improvement?

NW:

We are very much encouraged by the major improvements in passing rates for both trainees of the College Programme and the candidates re-attempting the examination in both the written and clinical components of the recent MMed (FM) Examination. We are also heartened by the fact that many of our graduates have moved on to leadership roles in the family medicine community and are contributing to the development of the next generation of doctors.

The College Programme already admits doctors from various Family Medicine (FM) settings consisting of private sector practitioners, public institution (polyclinic) doctors, community hospital physicians and many more. One area for improvement would be to attract more doctors from this diversity to take up further higher training in FM to help meet the increasing needs of our society.

**SK:**

One of the main strengths of our College Programme is the great camaraderie and strong sense of 'family' among our trainers and trainees. This helps the trainees get through the challenges faced during the course.

Doctors that come through the programme not only pass the examinations but also become better trained doctors in the process, rising up to the challenges brought on by the ageing population and the increasing complexity of care. One area where we hope to do better is to increase the visibility and awareness of what FM is about among our undergraduates and post-graduates such that more doctors will choose this as their career path.

CM:

Can you share the vision going forward?

NW:

Going forward, we hope to grow the programme into one big community of trainers and trainees that identify with the College and work together regardless of the FM settings they come from to provide a positive learning experience for our trainees and foster strong lasting bonds among our graduates.

SK:

The course will have to evolve and keep pace as FM itself changes. The College will also have to strategise and prepare for a ramp up in numbers to meet the needs of the community. For that we will not only need more trainers and operational support, but we hope to get more of the fresh graduands to return as trainers to 'give back' to the college programme. These new trainers will be able to use their recent experiences to better help the trainees with new perspectives and ideas on training.

■ CM

Q&A with *FCFP(S)* Programme Directors

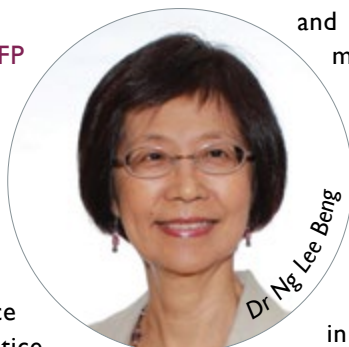
Interviewed by Dr Fok Wai Yee Rose, MCFP(S), Editor (Team A)

College Mirror (CM):

What are the goals and strengths of the FCFP and achievements of the programme?

**Programme Director (PD),
Dr Ng Lee Beng (NLB):**

The main goal of the Family Medicine (FM) Fellowship (Advanced specialty programme) programme is to carry on FM training from MMed(FM) level, to produce family physicians to be experts in FM practice



and manage the many patients with multiple co-morbidities and psychosocial factors affecting outcomes of medical conditions in diverse settings.

The arena of FM practice extends beyond the ambulatory care domain as family physicians are called upon to not only be the primary care doctors of patients needing complex care in the polyclinic clusters and general practice, but

(continued on the next page)

(continued from Page 19: Q&A with FCFP(S) PDs)

are also expected to fulfil the expanded role of leading medical teams in the acute hospitals, community hospitals and nursing homes, multi-clinic business in the community, to deliver ambulatory care, transitional and integrated care within and across different care arenas. With the widely accepted view that the previous hospital-centric care model is unsustainable, the family physicians are taking on significant roles as thought leaders and researchers in effective healthcare delivery models.

The Fellowship programme has turned out many who are currently the leaders in the polyclinic clusters, the family medicine departments in acute and community hospitals as well as in intermediate and long-term facilities.

Aside from training in complex clinical care, the Fellowship trainee is imbued into a culture of research and education. The FM fraternity is revamping undergraduate training extensively to meet the current healthcare needs. It has traditionally, under the College of Family Medicine, provided postgraduate training to its own rank and file and I am happy to see a steady conduit of excellent trainers and examiners come off the Fellowship train.

Under my watch from 2012, when I was called to restructure the programme with A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, I would say the greatest achievement was having the programme earn recognition by the Academy of Medicine Singapore that it provides rigorous post graduate training. The then Master of the Academy, upon scrutinising the programme curriculum and seeing with his eyes, the good work in transitional care by family physicians, pushed for the creation of the Chapter of Family Medicine physicians under the Academy. This has won for FM equality status with the other specialties within the Academy.

One big plus of the programme is it is the only national advanced specialty programme for FM. This creates an opportunity for all FM trainees from various settings to train together on the same platform. I believe this creates camaraderie, builds common understanding and unity which can only be good for a specialty that is practised in diverse settings wherein each little colony can so easily be sequestered in its small world thinking.

CM:

Can you share the vision going forward?



NLB:

It is timely to pass on the baton to a younger team. I hope that the programme:

A. Continue to prepare trainees to practise FM in various settings and maintain the standard of holistic care from family physicians in Singapore.

It is time for a programme evaluation and curriculum review to check that the programme remains relevant, and to maintain a robust yet realistic academic standard.

B. Will help FM to achieve legal specialty status in Singapore

The specialists have recognised FM as a specialty. However this has yet to be endorsed by the Ministry of Health (MOH). I believe that MOH's open endorsement will help itself achieve its Primary Care 2.0 vision as this will help the public to accept that specialist care exists in the community and that there is no necessity to cling on to the organ or disease specific specialists long after their acute medical issues have been stabilised. Shared care between the FM specialists and hospital specialists, with the public's buy in, will free up the hospital specialists to concentrate on administering relevant expert care as needed, as well as ensure that the patients receive holistic care from the well trained family physicians. In all, according FM specialty status shall be a win-win for all stakeholders. Obliquely, but significantly the best medical students will also be more attracted to enter a specialty equal in status and not the Cinderella of the medical profession. This will help ensure that the best brains are distributed across the healthcare scene to deliver optimal care in every arena. Meanwhile, I would like to quote the words of the eminent veteran family doctor, Dr Lee Suan Yew, to encourage all of us: "We continue to train well and do excellent work, and recognition will come."

I do hope, for the sake of our patients and our nation, that this recognition will come sooner than later.

Programme Director (PD),

Dr Luke Low (LL):

I concur fully and agree wholeheartedly with what Lee Beng has said. It is our hope that fellows trained in FM be recognised as a specialist with broad-based generalist training. This will really attract the brains that the fraternity needs, in order to better serve the needs of our ageing population. Thanks to Lee Beng for her able leadership of the Fellowship programme thus far, and I hope we can bring it to greater heights!

■ CM