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Dr. S.H. Lee, Dr. Stephen Foo, Prof. Wes Fabb, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be invited to speak to such a distinguished audience and indeed a rare privilege for me as one of the founders of the College to be asked to give the Keynote Address on the august occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners in my capacity as the World President of WONCA. The fact that I was elected the President of the World Organization of Family Doctors is not just a personal achievement; but more importantly, I consider it as the recognition by G.P. Colleges and Academies from all over the world of the esteem in which they hold general practitioners in Hong Kong. Locally, the status of our general practitioners is also firmly established in the sense that the Fellowship of our College is the first locally granted postgraduate specialty degree fully recognised by the Medical Council of Hong Kong. It therefore behoves me as the Founding-President to review in brief some significant historical milestones in the founding of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners.

It was when I was the President of the Hong Kong Medical Association way back in the early 1970's and had to travel around the world several times to canvas the world fraternity of medical associations for international recognition of the HKMA by it being accepted as a full member by the World Medical Association that I came to be in contact with members of the medical profession of many different nations. In the process, I was exposed to the existence of Colleges or Royal Colleges and Academies of General Practitioners/Family Physicians in developed western countries.

The advisability of the establishment of a College of General Practitioners in Hong Kong was first brought to the attention of the HKMA Council at its meeting on 6th December, 1973 when it was decided to write to all Colleges of General Practitioners in the world to seek information. In September 1974, the HKMA Council appointed Dr. Wong Chiu Lung to chair a Feasibility Committee to study the information so far collected and to look in depth at the feasibility of establishing such a College.

In June 1975, the HKMA Council sent Dr. C.L. Wong to pay an official visit to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in Sydney to gather on the spot information. Dr. C.L. Wong's official report, submitted on 31st July 1975, informed the HKMA Council that officials of the

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Royal Australian College of General Practitioners were very keen to help in the formation of the Hong Kong College and even planned to send their President, Dr. David A. Game, their Secretary-General, Dr. F.M. Farrar, and their Chairman of the Family Medicine Programme, Dr. R. Harbison, to Hong Kong in early December for one week with all expenses paid by the Royal Australian College. This report was received with much enthusiasm and the Council appointed Dr. Henry F.K. Li to head a Working Party to form the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners.

Thus was the Hong Kong College conceived, and the rest was history. The final report of the Working Party was submitted on 6th November 1975, and an Interim Council of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners, again chaired by Dr. Henry F.K. Li, was appointed. Due to circumstances beyond our control, the drafting of the constitution of the College with its associated Memorandum and Articles of Association took much longer than originally envisaged. The Hong Kong College held its first General Meeting on 13th October 1977, but deferred holding its official inauguration until Sunday, the 11th of March 1979. This event took place at the City Hall Theatre and was well attended by many local and foreign dignitaries. The occasion was highlighted by the presentation by the President of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Dr. W.D. Jackson, to the newly installed President of the Hong Kong College a symbolic Insignia of Office - a Gavel, which you can see now on the table in front of you.

This brief review of historical facts proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the Hong Kong Medical Association was the "Mother" of the Hong Kong College, which birth was greatly assisted and facilitated by the Royal Australian College. On our 15th Birthday, therefore, it is fitting and appropriate that I, as the Founding-President, should place on record our deep debt of gratitude to these two organizations.

Once formed, the College set about its task with vigour and enthusiasm. One of the early tasks was to develop a description of the role of the general practitioner. At that time, although there were many sound general practitioners in Hong Kong providing quality medical care to their patients, most had no idea about the *discipline* of General Practice and no understanding of the *concept* on which the discipline is based. College Committees set about examining all available literatures on General Practice from around the world, and with the advice of other Colleges of General Practitioners and renowned academics invited to visit Hong Kong, an account of the role of general practitioners in Hong Kong was gradually defined and a full comprehension of the core knowledge, the professional skills and the academic content of the Specialty of General Practice was eventually achieved.

One of the initial activities of the College was the production of its journal, which from the outset has been distributed widely throughout Hong Kong and overseas. In addition to providing clinical information, it informed its readers about the discipline of general practice and showed that general practice was a discipline with its own field of action, its own clinical method and approach to presenting problems, and its own area for research. As the discipline became better identified, the confidence of general practitioners grew and a corporate identity was established.

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Early in its history, the College established programmes of continuing medical education which soon attracted general practitioners keen to learn more about their discipline and how to apply the latest advances in medicine to the care of their patients. Small group discussions were a feature of these programmes as they afforded participants the opportunity to discuss with each other the problems their patient presented, the contemporary issues facing medical practice in Hong Kong, and the way in which they managed their practices.

It has been a pattern around the world that once a college of general practitioners has established programmes of continuing education, attention turns to vocational training. The training of young doctors for the discipline of general practice is a much more difficult process than continuing education, as it requires the collaboration of hospitals and specialists who provide the hospital component of training, and general practitioners who provide the general practice component by taking trainees into their practices. Initially the Evangel Hospital and the Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital were selected, and an invitation was extended to their serving medical officers to join an informal vocational training programme. Their consultants became their mentors and provided them with experience and teaching. Consultants gave their time free of charge and the trainees studied in their own time. The College owes a great debt of gratitude to those consultants and to those early trainees who forged a path through vocational training for others to follow. The experience gained in mounting this initial training programme enabled the development of a formal vocational training programme for general practice complete with objectives, curriculum, and learning and assessment methods. The College is proud that it is the first Medical Specialty in Hong Kong to publish a "Handbook for Vocational Training in General Practice" in 1985 and its second edition in 1990.

Although small in scale, formal vocational training is now taking place in Hong Kong through the participation of a number of collaborating hospitals, namely the Evangel, Our Lady of Maryknoll, Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole and United Christian Hospitals. The general practice component of training is carried out at Evangel Hospital Family Practice Unit, the General Practice Unit of the Department of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong at the Ap Lei Chau Clinic, the Family Medicine Unit of the Department of Community and Family Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong at Lek Yuen Health Centre, the Education and Training Centres in Family Medicine at the Ngau Tau Kok and Violet Peel Polyclinics, and at the University Health Service of the University of Hong Kong.

One of the striking features of vocational training for general practice in Hong Kong in the past and up to the present time, is that both the trainers and the trainees undertake most of the teaching and learning required in their own time. This voluntary contribution by both trainees and trainers to the development of vocational training for general practice in Hong Kong is to be applauded. However, it is a matter of regret that there is still very limited capacity in Hong Kong to provide vocational training for those who wish to have it. Because of its voluntary nature, there are at present only about 12 doctors in basic training and 8 in advanced training. With the advent of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, it is hoped that vocational training in General Practice will become more formalised and that government resources will be ploughed into its further development and expansion.

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In recent years, the College has expressed concern about the quality and range of services provided by the General Out-Patients Department of the Department of Health, and the dearth of training and continuing medical education of the doctors working there. The College felt this was a neglected area which had not been touched upon at all in the Scott Report on *The Delivery of Medical Services in Hospitals* published in December 1985. The College therefore welcomed the appointment by the Hong Kong Government in August 1989 of the Working Party on Primary Health Care, headed by Professor Rosie Young, which examined all aspects of primary health care in Hong Kong. That report, which was published in December 1990, made a number of major recommendations for the improvement of primary health care which are now being implemented.

Before the Working Party had completed its report, the Director of Health, Dr. S.H. Lee, commissioned an assignment to examine specifically the education and training in family medicine of doctors working in the Government Out-Patients Department. The result was the Fabb Report presented in October 1990. Dr. Lee should be congratulated on his positive response to the Fabb Report and what transpired thereafter was as mentioned by Dr. Foo in his opening remarks.

It is appropriate at this point to underscore the importance of Academic General Practice in both of our universities. The College has always advocated that the Specialty of General Practice must be included as one of the major subjects for teaching in the undergraduate curriculum. To encourage and to stimulate the development of Departments of General Practice/Family Medicine in the Universities, the College, though itself under severe financial constraints, donated \$100,000 to the University of Hong Kong in 1982 to establish the "HKCGP Visiting Professor in General Practice" in HKU, and donated another \$100,000 to the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1984 to establish the "HKCGP Visiting Professor in General Practice" in CUHK. We are glad that our efforts were not in vain, because the subject of General Practice/Family Medicine was included in undergraduate teaching in both medical schools soon afterwards.

Established in 1985, the Unit of General Practice of the Department of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong was housed initially in the Violet Peel Polyclinic in Wanchai, but has moved recently to well-equipped new premises in a clinic in Ap Lei Chau, where there are consulting rooms, video equipment for the recording of consultations, seminar rooms, a library, and office space for the academic and support staff. There, students are able to see how the general practitioner provides continuing care to a group of patients who regard him or her as their family doctor. Computers are used to keep medical records and to teach the students.

The Family Medicine Unit of the Department of Community and Family Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong was established in 1984. It is housed in the Lek Yuen Health Centre in rather cramped conditions. Office space for staff, seminar rooms and video equipment are provided. There, too, computerised medical records assist students to see how family doctors care for their patients over time.

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Recently the University of Hong Kong advertised the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Chair in General Practice and will soon be selecting a suitable person to fill that post. The Department of Community and Family Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong is also advertising for a Professor of Family Medicine. We in the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners recognise the vital importance of the contribution to the Specialty of General Practice by academic general practitioners and acclaim the intention of both universities to engage senior academics of high international repute at a professorial level.

The College passed another major milestone in 1984, when just seven years after its beginning, it felt confident enough about its grasp of the discipline, and mature enough in its organizational structure, to put in place a system of assessment which could measure the knowledge, skills and attitudes of fellow general practitioners to determine whether they were worthy of Fellowship of the College. The College was fortunate to have at that time the distinguished guidance and support of Professor David Todd, Professor of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong, and now President of the Interim Council of the Academy of Medicine, as our Censor-in-Chief. With his help, and the advice of eminent overseas academics, the first examination for senior and respected members of the College was mounted in 1984 when senior College examiners were joined by overseas examiners to assess the quality of the candidates. Three such examinations were held, and at the third, invited observers from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners were present to assess the quality of the examination process and the standards set by the examiners, so that they could advise the RACGP Council whether it would be appropriate for RACGP to join the HKCGP in a conjoint examination. These observers were so impressed by the standards set that they recommended that a conjoint examination be entered into, and the first was mounted in 1987. So far, six conjoint examinations have been held and a total of 26 candidates have passed, receiving both the Fellowship of the Hong Kong and Australian Colleges.

Thus, it can be seen that Prof. Todd was instrumental in setting the initial standards of the Specialty of General Practice in Hong Kong and it is therefore more than befitting that he is the recipient of the signal honour of being conferred the Honorary Fellowship of the College at today's ceremony. I offer Prof. Todd my heartiest congratulations.

In the field of research, the Hong Kong College has made substantial progress; indeed it is quoted as having made the most significant initiative in research in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1980, it developed with the help of *International Classification of Health Problems in Primary Care (known as ICHPPC)* produced by WONCA (a subject to which I shall return later), a computerised register for recording morbidity in general practice in Hong Kong, and its findings were published in several issues of the College Journal. The College recognises the critical importance of research to the intellectual strength of a discipline, and encourages its members to undertake research, no matter how modest, as each project adds to the understanding of the discipline as a whole. An active Research Committee guides and supports College members through their projects. At the same time, the Research Committee has developed several management guidelines (which were also published in the College Journal) to encourage College members to take an active part in the process of self-audit and quality assurance.

With its achievements in continuing medical education, vocational training and research, and with its well respected journal and examination system, it might reasonably have been expected that the College would receive appropriate recognition. However, although recognition has been afforded by many sections of the medical community in Hong Kong, it was a matter of great regret that the Halnan Report on *Postgraduate Medical Education and Training*, did not deem it appropriate to recommend the discipline of General Practice as one of the specialties of medicine, when it is so recognised all around the world. It is to the great credit of the Preparatory Committee of the Academy of Medicine under the leadership of Professor David Todd, that it finally acknowledged the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners as one of the Foundation Colleges of the Academy. We are proud that our College is the only founding College of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine which has its own premises and is today celebrating its 15th Anniversary.

Although the College has devoted much of its energy and resources in the development of its own organisation and programmes, it has at the same time extended its influence well beyond the perimeters of Hong Kong.

For many years I have been a member of the Council and Executive Committee of the World Organization of Family Doctors, otherwise known as WONCA, and I am now its President. In addition, Dr. Eddie T. Chan, the incumbent Hon. Treasurer of the Hong Kong College, is concurrently the WONCA Regional Vice-President of the Asia-Pacific Region. As I have said earlier, I regard these as honours for Hong Kong and for the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners.

In 1986, I led a delegation of the Hong Kong College to Beijing where we spoke with health authorities in China about the concepts of general practice and family medicine. As they were eager to learn more about how general practice or family medicine might be introduced into China, subsequent visits took place under the auspices of the World Organisation of Family Doctors, which used its good offices to negotiate a grant from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This grant enabled an expert in family medicine from Canada to visit Beijing for a period of six months to assist academics at the Capital Institute of Medicine to develop a training programme in family medicine. The grant also funded visits from doctors in Taiwan who brought with them medical texts in Chinese.

The extent of the interest in general practice in China was demonstrated by the formation in 1989 of the Beijing Society of General Practice, which held its first international conference later that year, and applied to become an associate member of the World Organisation of Family Doctors. Plans are now being made to form a nation-wide Chinese Society of General Practice/Family Medicine, which is expected to be inaugurated in November 1993 and to apply for full membership of WONCA. To celebrate its inauguration, the Chinese Society will host its second international conference in General Practice in Beijing between 1st and 3rd of November of this year.

The Hong Kong College has played a major role in fostering communication between doctors interested in family medicine in this part of Asia. The College has hosted three conferences, two in

Hong Kong and one in Macau, of doctors from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore. These meetings have allowed the transfer of ideas, concepts and information between the participants and have given impetus to the development of General Practice in China.

Earlier this year, WONCA sent a team of experts to Beijing to assist with curriculum planning for general practice/family medicine. The experts met for a week in Beijing, then travelled to the provinces to seek input at the grass-roots level, and then gathered again in Beijing to compile their report. The report will soon be ready for publication and will provide helpful guidelines for the development of general practice training and medical education in China.

So what began as a modest initiative of the Hong Kong College in 1986 has now developed into what promises to become a major development in health care in China. Interest in general practice is at the highest levels; I have recently received a personal letter from the Minister of Public Health in China requesting assistance in the training of doctors in the discipline of General Practice.

However, China is not the only area where WONCA's expertise is being sought. In Latin America where interest in family medicine has been stimulated by the International Center for Family Medicine (ICFM), a regional organization in the Americas centred in Buenos Aires, WONCA's collaboration is being sought in order to carry forward the progress made so far. Many fledgling national organisations of general practitioners exist there, but need the support of a world organisation to assist them to achieve their objective of promoting family medicine in Central and South America.

The same situation exists in Eastern Europe where many organisations of general practitioners which previously were unable to associate with similar organisations in the West, are now keen to join WONCA and to benefit from the experience and expertise of other organisations. In Russia too, there is great interest in family medicine and WONCA's support is being sought to establish an international information centre on family medicine in Moscow.

WONCA has also had a long association with the World Health Organisation. Recognising that the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)*, produced periodically by the World Health Organisation, was inadequate for coding the illnesses seen in general practice, WONCA formed a Classification Committee which worked with WHO to provide classifications relevant to General Practice. Initially they produced the *International Classification of Health Problems in Primary Care* (known as ICHPPC), which is based on the ICD but which extends the coding to include the wide variety of conditions seen in General Practice. Then followed the *Reason for Encounter* classification which records why the patient presented to the doctor. With this, the *International Classification of Process in Primary Care* was developed which classifies what the doctor did for the patient. And currently, the Research Committee of WONCA is field testing a new classification, *Functional Status Assessment in Family Practice*, which is used to record progressively the disability caused by illness. This family of classifications has given new impetus to research in General Practice, as it gives researchers a common language for recording the phenomena of General Practice.

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WONCA has been prominent too in the field of medical education. In 1994, it will join hands with the World Health Organization for the first time to conduct a Conjoint WHO/WONCA International Conference on "The Role of Family Physicians in Increasing the Social Relevance of Medical Education". Also WONCA has supported the World Federation for Medical Education which conducts regional and world conferences on the contemporary state of medical education and its future development. In fact, Prof. Henry Walton, the President of the World Federation for Medical Education, recently invited WONCA to be partners in the World Conference on Medical Education to be held in Edinburgh in August 1993 on "The Changing Medical Profession". Just last week, I sent a message to Prof. Wes Fabb, the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer of WONCA (who was then in Australia) to suggest that Dr. Michael Boland of Ireland, a WONCA Executive Member, Dr. Goran Sjonell of Sweden, WONCA President-Elect, and Dr. Alastair Donald of UK, President of the Royal College of General Practitioners, be sent to Edinburgh as official WONCA delegates.

Recognising that most of the world's population still live in rural areas, WONCA has recently established a Working Party on Rural Medicine, headed by the first Professor of Rural Medicine in the world, Professor Roger Strasser of Monash University in Victoria. The Working Party will examine the needs of rural communities and the way in which family doctors can be trained and deployed to meet those needs. WONCA considers this working party of vital importance, particularly to the development of health care services in developing countries.

Because of its close association with WONCA since its inception, the College was commissioned to host the 1987 WONCA Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in Hong Kong. The conference was highly successful and was attended by over 500 delegates from 35 countries. It demonstrated that such regional conferences can attract participants from all corners of the globe. The success of this conference enabled the Hong Kong College to bid successfully to host the 14th WONCA World Conference on Family Medicine in 1995, an event which we anticipate will attract over 3,000 participants.

So on our 15th birthday we, the members of the College, look back proudly at the outstanding achievements of our College, both at home and abroad. Our small numbers have not prevented us from achieving great things. However, it is the future to which we look with excitement and anticipation, for we know whatever we have accomplished in the past, we can achieve even greater things in the future. We will re-double our efforts and we shall succeed.