

KEYNOTE SPEECH



Stephen Foo

President

The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners

Dr. S.H. Lee, Director of Health, Prof. Wes Fabb, representative of RACGP, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very honoured today to preside at the 6th Conferment Ceremony of the Fellowship of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. This ceremony is a momentous occasion for the medical profession in Hong Kong as we are also celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners. It places our community in the mainstream of a strong movement which has developed in many parts of the world in recent years to broaden existing concepts of medical education and practice. In particular, it recognises the increasingly important role played by many doctors who are the frontline providers of primary health care.

We applaud the enlightened action of the Director of Health, Dr. S.H. Lee, for commissioning Prof. Wes Fabb, National Director of Education of the Family Medicine Programme of the RACGP and Hon. Secretary/Treasurer of WONCA, to make recommendations on the ways and means to improve the delivery of medical care in Government Out-Patients Departments. The consultancy report, which was published in October 1990, proposes four streams of training and education: stream one consisting of a formal programme of vocational training in family medicine leading to Fellowship of HKCGP, a programme suited for young doctors; stream two offered an advanced programme of training and education leading to the FHKCGP, considered more suitable for experienced GOPD doctors; stream three was an advanced course of in-service education suitable for senior GOPD doctors who wished to substantially upgrade their knowledge and skills in family medicine; and stream four consisted of continuing medical education applicable to all those who wished to keep up with progress in family medicine.

The report also recommended that training centres be established at the Ngau Tau Kok Polyclinic at Kwun Tong and the Yan Oi Polyclinic at Tuen Mun, and that the General Practice Unit of the Department of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong and the Family Medicine Unit of the Department of Community and Family Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong be supported to enable them to provide postgraduate vocational training as well as undergraduate training. The two universities and the HKCGP were seen as partners with the Health Department in providing the manpower and expertise required to implement the training and education programmes, drawing as they could upon the expertise of the academic sector and private general practitioners. To reward those who successfully completed training, a career structure was recommended. Subsequently

a Seminar on the Fabb Report was held, which attracted over 200 doctors from the GOPD and the academic community, as well as interested politicians.

It is pleasing to the HKCGP that in September of last year, an Education and Training Centre in Family Medicine was opened at the Ngau Tau Kok Polyclinic by Professor David Todd. The Training Centre provides a model environment for training family doctors. Apart from being well equipped for clinical work, it has a wide range of educational equipment including seminar rooms, a well-stocked library, consulting rooms equipped with one way mirrors to allow observation of consultations, and video cameras for recording consultations.

To help organise and implement all these improvements in medical delivery, the Department of Health appointed Dr. Luke Tsang to be the first ever Consultant in Family Medicine in Government.

Dr. S.H. Lee and the Department of Health are to be warmly congratulated on taking these first steps towards training GOPD doctors. Already eleven doctors are in formal training at the Centre. But even now there is more demand for training than the number of places available.

However, the applause for the raising of standards in GOPDs is muffled by the failure of Government to recognise the importance of raising standards of General Practice in the private sector simultaneously. It must be pointed out that GOPD doctors take care of only 15% of all out-patients in Hong Kong, whereas the private sector accounts for 70%. It is therefore a matter of deep regret that Government neglected the private sector in the present exercise. The College is not advocating that public funds be made to finance the improvement in standards of medical practice of private practitioners, even though this is indeed done in many countries. Rather, we insist that private doctors be made to pay for their own continuing medical education. But it is our firm belief that government resources must be made available for the organisation and administrative expenses for the provision of continuing medical education and training. To paraphrase Winston Churchill: "Give us the money, and we shall do the job". And I must remind every one that the money is only for administrative expenses and not for medical education.

I wish to congratulate Prof. David Todd for being conferred Hon. Fellow of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners today. His tremendous achievements and the many contributions to the medical fraternity, you will learn from the citation by the Public Orator later.

I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating heartily the recipients today of the double Fellowships, the Fellows of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners and the Fellows of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. I must also congratulate the many members who will today receive their Certificates of Postgraduate Studies. I have to thank these doctors for their steadfastness and perseverance during the past year. We are proud to demonstrate to the public of Hong Kong that so many doctors, in spite of heavy demands on their time, could still take part and complete the education programme offered by the College to better themselves professionally so that they can better serve our people and our community.

To all, best wishes and may you as general practitioners serve your community faithfully and with distinction.