

Messsage from Chief Censor and Former President



Dr Natalis C L Yuen

Growing pain of the formative years –
from Dr Natalis Yuen (President
1989-1992)

Before the inception of the College, an interim Council was formed by the HKMA Council and chaired by the late Dr Henry F K Li, for the establishment of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners. In 1977, Dr Peter C Y Lee was elected President and I Honorary Secretary. We would have Council meetings until very late at night at the HKMA Council chamber at Hennessy Road, where the watchman would kindly remind us to leave before midnight, so we would adjourn to the old premises at Wyndham Street until the early hours in the mornings. While everybody else nodding off to sleep, Peter, true to his form, thought of many new ideas, many of which surprisingly came to fruition.

First, we had College Newsletters, followed by the College Journal, which continued to be published. We witnessed the first College CME Programme promulgated through the Journals, the first CME Programme to be organised by an academic college. At first, anyone who returned the answer sheet was accredited (without the answers being marked) but subsequently a pass of 55% was needed for accreditation. There were no CPD either. The establishment of the College examination was even more problematic; we were being criticised for creating another examination while no one at the College having a postgraduate Fellowship degree. Therefore, being the Chairman of the Working Committee on Fellowship Examination, I went to Australia twice to sit for the written and clinical parts of the Royal Australian College Fellowship Examination. Dr. Peter Lee had the foresight that the College Examination must join with other Colleges to maintain an international standard; we are now at the 17th Conjoint Fellowship Examination with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

Starting our Vocational Training Programme was even more difficult. Hong Kong had never considered vocational training in general practice medicine; there was no funding, facilities or resources for training. The only hospital which subscribed to the idea for its residents was the Evangel Hospital. Four residents joined the College Training Programme, and the College provided part-time tutorials; these residents had the highest passing rates of the Fellowship Examinations.

The most challenging issue facing the College from 1989 to 1992 was the recognition of the importance of primary care and general practice as a keystone in healthcare systems and that trained general practitioners/family physicians should be recognised as specialists. Three important reports were released during this period: (1) Report of Working Party on Primary Health Care, *Health for all, the way ahead*, Chaired by Professor Rosie T T Young (1990), (2) Training and Education Programmes in Family Medicine, *Assignment Report*, submitted by Professor Wesley E Fabb (1990), and (3) the Halnan's Report on Postgraduate Education and Training chaired by Professor Keith Halnan (1988) Despite having spent two years of valuable time with the Working Party on Primary Health Care and after more than one hundred recommendations, very little has been adopted by the Government. As Professor Young once said helplessly "you may advise, but they may not listen". The only ideas adopted in the past decade from the Fabb Report were the establishment of a training centre at Nga Tau Kok Jockey Club GOPD and a consultant Post. The Academy of Medicine was finally established in 1992 (from Halnan Report and Prof. David Todd's Preparatory Committee). The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners had become one of the 15 specialty Colleges of the Academy.

