Reflections
The AMS Chapter in Perspective

A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean

The Chapter of FM Physicians has been inaugurated within the Academy of Medicine. It is timely to take a step back to reflect on the present and to strategize for the future. The following are some of my thoughts.

1. **Unique situation of FM Chapter in AMS formed after a matured College exists**
   The College of Family Physicians has a heterogeneous membership representing all family doctors in Singapore. It has a rich history and tradition with a systematic educational infrastructure to cover the broad discipline of FM. The FM Chapter is thus different from Chapters of other disciplines in the AMS which may aspire to evolve into Colleges when their membership increases.

   It is important for the new Chapter in AMS whose fellows are also fellows of the College to work in unity with the College. FM leaders have responsibilities for the education and practice of all family doctors. The minutes of AGM of the College reflecting the above views were affirmed in the first Committee meeting of the Chapter held on 17 January 2015.

2. **What would FM Physicians bring to the table for other specialists in AMS?**
   FM is a specialty of breath. Family Medicine Physicians are experts in trans-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary domains. Seeing the impressive CVs of the members of Chapters while processing the fellowships applications made us proud to be part of this fraternity. FM Physicians have unique contributions to share with their AMS colleagues.
3. **The Chapter-College unity would strengthen our healthcare delivery system and transmute the generalists-specialists divide**

The overt translational role of the dual fellows provides opportunities for closer interaction of all family doctors with specialist colleagues in AMS through fellows of the Chapter. This collaboration would work to levelling up healthcare provided by all doctors – specialists imbued with whole person perspectives and generalists armed with added focused skills.

4. **Mature development of young doctors as FM physicians practising Primary, Personal, Comprehensive and Continuing Care in many settings**

There is now a clearer professional and career aspiration for young doctors in family medicine. Using the analogy of climbing mountains that A/Prof Lee KH used, there is now opportunity for different levels and spheres of attainments and contributions. Such young doctors would now see FM as a career of choice on par with their colleagues who are in other disciplines/specialties if they decide to go for advanced training recognized by the award of FAMS.

5. **Greater acceptance beyond AMS of FM as specialty**

The formation of this Chapter of FM in the Academy and its peer acceptance as a specialty is a significant milestone. The Permanent Secretary for Health and the Director of Medical Services have publicly accepted FM as a discipline and its inclusion in the Academy of Medicine alongside other specialists. FM is now overtly accepted as a discipline practiced in many settings in clinics, in nursing homes, hospitals and even at patients’ home.

Some has asked how long more, could family medicine physicians be de jure addressed as medical specialists now that FM is recognized as a specialty by the Academy.

The answer:

The Fellows in the Chapter of FM Physicians are already recognized as Family Medicine Physicians by the whole profession. Further recognition takes time. It took us forty years to arrive at this stage. With the undivided support of the whole profession now, the next milestone would be sooner rather than later.
Forthcoming Events

49th SINGAPORE MALAYSIA CONGRESS IN MEDICINE
31 July to 2 August 2015
The Academia @ SingHealth

The Chapter is organizing two symposiums on Sunday, 2 August, as part of the SMCM. Details and more information of the whole conference can be seen at www.smcm-ams.com.

Intensive Primary Care: Managing Patients with Complex Needs Outside the Hospital, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Intensive primary care is the new mission for family physicians in response to a rapidly ageing society and the inadequacy of a hospital centric healthcare system to meet the new challenge. This workshop will give participants a framework to practise intensive care outside the hospital. It will also provide an exercise in practical applications using a case scenario.

Defining the Art of Counseling within the Consultation: Brief Integrative Personalised Therapy (BIPT), 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

A system of integrating counseling within the usual consultation has been developed. The consultation is extended by increasing the repertoire of therapeutic roles assumed by the doctor and by using extended relating and inquiry skills. A formulation of the reason for encounter can hence be arrived at in addition to the diagnosis of the presenting complaint. The patient can then be managed holistically using the usual treatment modalities plus psychological approaches. Some techniques would be demonstrated in two workshops following an overview.
Forthcoming Events

INDUCTION COMITIA
Saturday, 28 March 2015  
Auditorium, The Academia @ SingHealth

Thirty-one Fellows of the FM Chapter signed up for the Induction Comitia on 28 March 2015. You would be presented with your Fellowship scroll, then for registration with the Singapore Medical Council. For those who are unable to attend, please note that the next Induction Comitia will be held on 31 July 2015. Kindly contact Ms Cheong Sue Lin, AMS Membership Executive, at Tel: 6593 7883 for further information.

Dr Lim Fong Seng is representing the Chapter as part of the stage party and A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock is attending as President of our College. Please remember to be there for the stage photo with them and AMs Master, Prof Lim Shih Hui, after the Induction ceremony.

The photo below was taken at the First Induction Comitia of FM Fellows on 25 October 2014 with the Guest-of-Honour, Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Permanent Secretary (Health), Ministry of Health. More photos can be seen at http://ams.edu.sg/photo-gallery/induction-comitia-oct-2014
INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING (IGM)
17 January 2015

In his January/February 2015 Master’s Message, Prof Lim Shih Hui highlighted the IGM of our Chapter on 17 January 2015 (http://ams.edu.sg/master-message). Dr Elaine Tan, Director, Primary & Community Care of Ministry of Health, Past Presidents of College, AMS Past Masters and present Council members of both institutions were honored guests of the occasion. Present were also leaders of the FM fraternity and other Fellows of the FM Chapter.

Prof Lim Shih Hui presented letters of appointments to the following Interim Committee members of the Chapter. The Committee had its first meeting after the IGM to decide on administrative matters.
Dr Chew Chin Hin, Past Master of the Academy was an honored guest of the Inaugural General Meeting of the Chapter. In a congratulatory note, he attached a photo of a classical painting by Sir Luke commissioned by The Tate Gallery of London in 1887 and completed in 1889.

The painting depicted a family physician, Dr Murray, attending to a child patient with compassion, care and concern. The hand of the patient’s father was on the shoulder of his distraught wife to console her while he looked on pensively. It was said that the painting was based on Sir Luke’s personal experience when he lost his son years earlier.

Some photos of the Inaugural General Meeting and dinner are reproduced in the following pages.
Report:

Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) of the Chapter of FM Physicians, AMS

Excerpts of Address by A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean

Celebrating the close Relationship of Academy and College

The close relationship of the Academy and College goes back 40 years.

This is evident from this photo taken in 1975 of College President, Dr Wong Heck Sing, with then AMS Master, Dr Chew Chin Hin, and his Council during a visit by President of the Republic, Prof Benjamin Sheares.

During Dr Chew’s tenure as AMS Master, Dr Wong Heck Sing was conferred AMS Fellowship, the first family physician to be so honored.
We also have a photo of Prof Ransome, founding AMS Master, being conferred FCGP (Hon), the first academician so honored. Forty years on, the formation of the Chapter FM Physicians is a milestone in this journey.

However, the journey to seek due recognition from the authorities was daunting. At many points, there were disappointments as documented in A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock’s College President’s message in the College Mirror (Vol 40 No 4 / Dec 2014).

However ‘That which does not kill, makes us stronger’ (Friedrich Nietzsche) and out of the struggle, the Family Medicine movement threw up many strong and resilient leaders.

The FM Spirit

Tonight’s dinner is hosted by Dr Tan See Leng. This should come as no surprise. We all know how See Leng organized the WONCA conference for the College in 2006 that won prestige for FM in Singapore. He also made millions for the College through this conference which he later multiplied through an astute property investment. The monies now provide a solid financial foundation for the development of FM education in Singapore.
See Leng like many of you went through the rigorous MMed programme B (now named MMed College programme) before embarking on fellowship training. In these photos, we see a young See Leng who famously told the Straits Times reporter in 1996 that we are not ‘frogs in the well’ though the trainees were holed up every week in the room above my clinic diligently studying for the Masters examination.

These photos also showed Lee Gan, Lean Huat, and the late Prof Wong Poi Kwong. Julian Lim and Dr Thirumoorthy (present AMS Censor-in-Chief) were teaching in the classes held above my clinic.
One lesser known See Leng's contribution was what he gave me the day after he passed his Masters. He handed me a cheque of $1500, a princely sum in 1998 —— not to pay up for the 'free' two-year tuition we provided (we freely taught and they freely came to learn), but to buy a photocopier for our programme which received no funding.

He knew the struggles that he and his fellow students went through for two years, when they each had to laboriously hand copy learning points from the cases presented, rather than have a consolidated one photocopied for all. He left a legacy of giving.

See Leng was but one of the many family doctors who generously gave their time and energies to train further generations. The Master of Medicine program B, the Graduate Diploma and the Fellowship built capacity in the FM fraternity.