

**ADDRESS BY DR LIM SHIH HUI**  
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**Induction Comitia 2014 of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore**  
17 May 2014, Saturday, Health Promotion Board

**Our Guest of Honour, Prof Benjamin Ong,  
Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health Singapore,**

**Past Masters, Council Members, Fellow Academicians,**

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

A very good afternoon to all of you. Welcome to the Induction Comitia 2014 of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore.

Firstly, let me thank Professor Benjamin Ong, our DMS, for taking time off from his busy schedule and precious Saturday afternoon to be our Guest of Honor to witness this Induction Comitia. It is really extraordinary to have two (2) contemporary senior neurologists to be on the same stage, not only for this Induction, but to bring healthcare and professional development, respectively, to the next higher level.

A total of 69 new Fellows will be inducted this afternoon. For the new inductees, please accept my heartiest Congratulations! You are now truly part of us, helping the Academy to preserve and advance our medical profession! You may have worn the academic gown quite a while ago when you obtained your basic and postgraduate degrees, but to wear the Academy's gown at this induction comitia serves to remind you that you need to remain academic in your life-long medical learning journey.

As specialists in your own field and Fellows of the Academy, I have no doubt you will maintain your clinical competencies by actively taking part in your continuing professional development programme. What you need to pay particular attention is to continue to maintain a high standard of professional and ethical practice which is expected of you by the Academy and our profession.

In your pursue for medical excellence and attempt to fulfill your dream to be super- or sub-specialist, nationally and in the region, I urge you not give up the basics and foundation of medicine. Since I am a physician, I shall touch on the specialty called General Internal Medicine which is the foundation for all IM-related specialties. For those of you in one of the IM specialties and being rostered to cover General Internal Medicine in your hospital, please do not be unhappy because your subspecialty patients are benefitting from your continuing experience gain in IM cover. I shall address the issue of General Surgery later.

We have witnessed the advancement of medicine since we graduated many years or decades ago. It was a norm the last 30 to 40 years that shortly after completion of advance training in Singapore, we proceeded with HMDP fellowship, to learn specialized skills which were not well-established in Singapore. For example, Prof Ben Ong and I underwent general neurology training in Singapore after basic training in General Internal Medicine. Following that, we went for HMDP, not in “General” Neurology but a subspecialty of neurology: he went for training in Clinical Neuro-immunology in the UK while I went to USA to do Epilepsy and Clinical Neurophysiology. We both excelled in our own sub-specialty of neurology and our patients benefited from the knowledge and experience we garnered locally as well as from abroad.

Specialization, sub-specialization and super-specialization are the norm the last 20-30 years! It is not surprising that medicine in Singapore has become mainly disease-base or organ-base. As you know, we now have 35 medical specialties, 5 medical subspecialties and 7 dental specialties. Many specialists or sub-specialists focus on one specific organ, system or part of it. This is very good for patients with only 1 organ-specific disease to receive highest level of care.

With high standard of medical care, good public health and preventive medicine, we now live longer! With longevity, we are seeing more chronic diseases and multiple co-morbidities amongst our aging population. It is quite common for patients nowadays to be looked after by multiple specialists for multiple diseases. They are being passed from one specialist to another like on a conveyer belt. Each specialist on this belt will try to make sure that these patients are well looked after, and do not have their specialty disease. Over investigations are not uncommon, and healthcare cost is expected to increase.

What our aging patients need most is to have good doctors who have competent overview of the whole patient and provide holistic and integrated care. This is where General Physicians, expert in General Internal Medicine, are so important in the hospital setting. Similarly, Family Medicine Physicians are pivotal to provide integrated and coordinated community care outside the acute care hospitals.

Our Academy and College of Physicians, Singapore, will help our IM-related specialists to maintain our competencies in General Internal Medicine. We will plan refresher or recertification courses, helping physicians to re-learn and to be

retrained in General Internal Medicine. Such courses are not restricted to physicians. Surgeons and other clinicians are welcome to join.

I shall now briefly touch on the practice of General Surgery, from a physician's perspective. Last evening I attended a meeting of surgeons, mainly to discuss how best to mobilize surgical specialists and subspecialists to provide good General Surgery care, as well as emergency surgeries, in a 1000-bed regional hospital. I was the only physician at the meeting. Without much vested interest, my observation and opinion could be considered as unbiased. My conclusion was that if you are not a neurosurgeon, a cardiothoracic surgeon, an orthopedic surgeon, a plastic surgeon, an ENT surgeon or an eye surgeon, please do not lose your General Surgical skills while pursuing excellence in your surgical specialties or sub-specialties. Maintaining good general surgical skills is important for private practice, but while you are still in public service, your general surgical skills are much needed to provide general surgical care, not just in a regional hospital, but also in a tertiary hospital. As such, please continue to contribute a significant amount of time in general surgery calls to maintain your skills.

For all inductees, please also devote some time to teach our medical students and junior doctors. The better you are as an Educator, the better you are a clinician.

Let me bring you back to the Academy. As Master of the Academy the last two (2) years, I realize the greatest asset of the Academy is our Fellows! With the commitment and dedication of our Council, senior and junior Fellows, Academy is progressing. The Vision of the Academy is to be a leading institution for postgraduate medical education and professional development of medical

specialists in the region. I am pleased to share with you our recent two initiatives.

On Vesak Day, our Academy has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health, Brunei Darussalam. We have been trusted by Brunei MOH to help to train their doctors. I foresee the journey of this collaboration will further enhance the long standing friendship between our two countries.

The second initiative is that our Academy will facilitate the recognition of Family Medicine as an important specialty of Medicine, by forming a Chapter of Family Medicine Physicians. We need your support to pass a special resolution at the coming Annual General Meeting to form this Chapter.

Last but not least, let me congratulate our 8 graduates of the Staff Registrar Scheme Diploma programs. You should be proud of your achievement to have fulfilled the stringent requirements to obtain the SRS Diploma. Your role in our public healthcare system is so important. Your longer presence will strengthen our aim to provide comprehensive and holistic care to our patients. I wish you all the best in your career advancement.

Let me say in conclusion that this afternoon will not be complete without the presence of our Guest of Honour and all of you in the audience.

Thank you all. Have an enjoyable induction.