



College of Public Health and Occupational Physicians Newsletter

A Newsletter of the College of Public Health & Occupational Physicians, Academy of Medicine, Singapore

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POPULI SALUS SUMMA

“Advancing the Health
of Populations”

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Editor:

Dr Jeremy Lim

President's Message



Dr Eugene Shum, with Prof Pat Troop, Chair FPH International Committee; Dr Sushma Acquilla, FPH International Adviser; and Mr Russell Ampofo, Head of Education and Training, UK Faculty of Public Health, St Andrew's Place, London

Greetings from the College of Public Health and Occupational Physicians!

In this issue we have provided updates on the activities that have taken place in the recent months, namely, the get-together cum visit to the Fortis Colorectal Hospital and the 1st Singapore International Public Health Conference.

Dr Mona Toh and Dr Jason Yap have contributed an article on setting professional standards and guidance for public health and occupational physicians. We would like to invite feedback on this area. In the Resident column, Dr Hanley Ho has shared on “A Lesson on Compassion”.

Last but not least, our Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) will be held on Friday, 1 Feb 2013. This occasion will formalize the formation of the College. We will be holding a Celebration Dinner after the IGM. We will like to invite all Fellows to join us for this momentous event.

— **Dr Eugene Shum**

Visit to the UK Faculty of Public Health

Dr Eugene Shum visited the UK Faculty of Public Health in London on 12 Oct 2012. The very fruitful meeting covered approaches to continuing professional development and collaborations in the training of public health residents and fellows. It also covered the partnership between physician and non-physician public health professionals. We are working towards closer corporation and exchanges with the UK Faculty of Public Health.

Update on Activities ...



The then Chapter organized a get-together cum visit to the Fortis Colorectal Hospital on 7 September 2012. It was attended by the committee, residents and public health professionals. It has been an evening of interactions and networking amongst the public health community.

This get-together hopes to bring about togetherness and foster ideas that would benefit the Public Health community. Your continued support is very much appreciated. We look forward to your participation in our next gathering.

The gathering at Fortis begins with a tour round the premise led by Dr. Jeremy Lim, CEO of Fortis Colorectal Hospital. Fortis Colorectal Hospital is the



first hospital in Singapore and South East Asia dedicated to colorectal diseases management. The tour was filled with enriching explanations about the hospital's conceptualization, milestones and facilities.

The evening concluded with dinner specially catered by the hospital's own catering service. Fellow Dr. Wong Chiang Yin generously contributed wine which was enjoyed immensely by all present. Over dinner, many exchanges and interactions occurred, raising a number of good ideas to benefit Singapore's public health community. Last but not least, we gathered feedback and discussed on the College crest and motto. These comments were consolidated and gave us our final design and wordings which are published in this issue.



1st SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE

In conjunction with the 7th Singapore Public Health & Occupational Medicine Conference 1-2 October 2012

An Update ...



The 1st Singapore International Public Health Conference held in conjunction with the 7th Singapore Public Health and Occupational Medicine Conference was on 1-2 October 2012 at Grand Copthorne Waterfront, Singapore. The 2-day event was an overwhelming success with more than 500 delegates from 27 different countries.

This year's conference was jointly organised by the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and the Chapter of Public Health and Occupational Physicians. For years, both have worked closely and synergistically, with the School pushing new frontiers through vigorous research and the Chapter using this evidence to effectively tackle population health issues. As we continue to find strength in collaboration, this augural event where the Chapter and the School came together for a joint scientific meeting has helped to foster ties worldwide amongst healthcare professionals.



The co-organisation of this conference by the Chapter and the School allowed us to bring together experts from academia, research, and healthcare agencies and institutions to create a very exciting opportunity for public health and occupational medicine professionals and all who were interested in both fields, to come together to share, discuss and chart the way forward. This year's theme of "Translating Public Health Research into Practice" was very appropriate as we encounter new and growing healthcare challenges ranging from an ageing population to the increasing threat of pandemics. It helped to serve as an important bridge in translating the latest research and thinking in population health into effective healthcare policies and programmes.



— Dr Benjamin Ng

- Organising Co-Chairman of 1st SIPH and 7th PHOM



Resident's Columns

A Lesson on Compassion

Allow me to share about my encounter with a young boy whom I met in a village in the Philippines recently, who taught me once again about the importance of maintaining compassion for those whom we serve.

I made a trip to Manila in July 2012 to help run some mobile medical clinics and was seeing patients at a small village a short distance out of Metro Manila. This village was not a well-off one, not even having access to any proper water source. Clean water was supplied to the villagers by trucks bearing water tanks which came every 1-2 weeks. The local church (one of the few buildings with access to piped water) ran what they called a “shower ministry”, which involved church volunteers giving the children in the village a proper bath once a fortnight. That such a form of service was needed by the village was truly a mind-boggling concept to me.

During the brief respite from the consults during lunchtime, I was asked by the pastor of the local church to see a boy staying nearby who had been blind for the last year. He was about 9 years old and I learnt that he had developed TB meningitis a year ago. He was treated with anti-TB therapy and completed his course of treatment, but during the course of treatment he lost his sight in both eyes.

A quick check with an ophthalmoscope revealed bad news. Both pupils were non-reactive and the optic discs were pale, which were signs of optic atrophy. Whether this was due to complications of TB meningitis, or due to the side effects of ethambutol therapy which was not properly monitored, I did not know. It did not matter, really. Clinically speaking, this boy's condition was irreversible, and there was no way he would regain his sight.

I knew I had to explain the boy's condition to his family and the pastor. As I began speaking, I suddenly found it difficult to let them know what I had found. It had suddenly become more apparent to me: there was no way this boy would regain his sight. I considered what could possibly be done for him. Given the social conditions in which he would have to grow up in, how would he gain access to specialised education for the visually handicapped, or acquire skills to be gainfully employed when older? I found no answers to these questions which went through my mind.

That day, my heart truly went out to this boy whom I had only just met. I could not help but think that his condition was one that was truly preventable, if only his social conditions were better, if only he had access to better healthcare...*if only... if only...*



As I said, I learnt anew that day the lesson on the need to have compassion for those we treat. As public health / occupational medicine physicians, we are often far removed from direct patient contact, and opportunities to demonstrate compassion towards others may come by only rarely. Yet intrinsically, most of us came into this profession in the first place for the purpose of doing good towards others. Maintaining a sense of compassion for others should continue to spur us on, even as we work to impact the lives of others at the community and population levels.

— **Dr Hanley Ho, 3rd Year Resident**

What is Professionalism in Public Health and Occupational Medicine?

At the recent Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony on 3 Nov 2012, new doctors were reminded on the noble calling of the medical profession. The medical profession was called to remember the expectation society has for its doctors to be responsible and accountable in the roles bestowed on fully fledged doctors. Mastery of knowledge should be pursued primarily for the benefit of others. Members of the profession are accorded the privilege of self-regulation, and appropriate ethical conduct is expected of its members. Lastly, it was emphasized that the amount of financial return is not an accepted measure of success in any one occupation.

Does this call to medical professionals resonate with you as a specialist, and a fellow of the Chapter of Public Health? How, in your opinion, does the standard of ethical conduct and professionalism for fully fledged doctors apply to specialists?

- ◆ Should the same standards apply or would society's expectation of specialists be higher than that for the general members of the medical profession?
- ◆ Would the expectation of public health and occupational medicine physicians be any different from clinical specialists, since we work toward the promotion of health of populations, and not individual patients?
- ◆ Is there a need for an instrument to define good practices in public health and occupational medicine?

— **Dr Mona Toh & Dr Jason Yap**

in consultation with Dr T. Thirumoorthy

Write to us at phom@ams.edu.sg and share your views with us!

Inaugural General Meeting

Dear Fellows

You are all invited to the College Inaugural General Meeting cum Dinner celebration :

Date : 1 February 2013, Friday
Time : 6.15pm—10.00pm (Dinner will commence at 7.30pm)
Venue : Garnet Room
Basement 1, Sheraton Towers Singapore
39 Scotts Road
Singapore 228230

For those who could only make it at a later time, you may join us for dinner at 7.30pm @ Diamond room, Basement 1. A nominal fee of \$20 will be collected for those attending the dinner. Kindly make cheque payable to "Academy of Medicine, Singapore". For enquires and RSVP kindly send to phom@ams.edu.sg



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