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Second Induction Comitia 2014 of the
Academy of Medicine, Singapore

25th October 2014, Saturday, Health Promotion Board

Our Guest of Honor, Mrs Tan Ching Yee,
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Singapore,
Past Master, Council Members, Fellow Academicians,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

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

Firstly, let me thank Mrs. Tan, our PS for Health, for taking time off from her busy schedule and precious Saturday afternoon to be our Guest of Honor to witness this Induction Comitia. Mrs. Tan has been very supportive of our Academy's initiatives all these while. A few months ago, the Academy signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement with the Ministry of Health of Brunei Darussalam, to help to train their doctors to be specialists. Mrs. Tan played a pivotal role in making this happened. Her strong support for this initiative further strengthened the already strong ties between the two Ministries of Health of both countries.

In addition, with her solid endorsement for having Family Medicine Physicians join our Academy, you are witnessing another milestone of the Academy today:

the induction of competently-trained Family Medicine Physicians Fellows into the Academy. Of a total of 81 new Fellows to be inducted this afternoon, 24 are Family Medicine Physicians. In fact, our Academy received 65 applications from Family Medicine Physicians. The other 40+ FM Fellows will be inducted next year.

For those who are senior to me in the audience, you may be in the know that in the late 1960s, our senior academicians invited our senior General Practitioners, or GPs, to form a Chapter within the Academy. Due to the nature of GP's training and practice then, they elected to have their own professional body to represent their interest. Subsequently, the College of General Practitioners, Singapore was formed in 1971, and renamed College of Family Physicians Singapore in 1993.

Over the last 40 years, the training to become Family Physicians became progressively tougher. Unlike many of us who can concentrate and excel in just one, two or three of the 35 specialties and 5 subspecialties, our Family Physicians have to be competent in many specialty subjects, not only 14 Internal Medicine related specialties, but also general surgery, orthopedic surgery, ophthalmology, ENT, O&G, psychiatry, pediatric as well as emergency medicine.

In order to be more all rounded, they have to undergo 3 years of basic training in Family Medicine, which is now called residency training, to gain knowledge of and exposure to as many specialties as possible. They have to pass an intermediate examination which is the Master of Medicine, Family Medicine. Just like the rest of specialty trainings, Family Medicine has an equivalent AST or Senior Residency phase. Those who choose to undergo advance Family Medicine training, they have to enroll into the College of Family Physicians, Singapore's Fellowship training programme. They also have to conduct research, complete a thesis, and

pass the Family Medicine Fellowship Examination which includes assessment of clinical competencies, teaching pedagogy and research methodology.

Based on training and assessment criteria, these Family Medicine Physicians have already fulfilled the entry criteria to be Fellows of our Academy. However, I wish to point out that Family Medicine is not only an important field of medicine in Singapore but an integral part of our healthcare system. Let me share an interesting story told by my good friend Prof. Christopher Cheng who is the audience today. As you know, he is Pro-Tem CEO of SengKang Health and SengKang Health is in charge of building SengKang General Hospital and SengKang Community Hospital, scheduled to be up and running in 2018. Chris told me this story when we discussed how we could integrate primary community care with tertiary specialist care in the northeast region of Singapore. This was how the story went.

“Two fishermen fishing by the river bank suddenly saw a person floating down the river struggling for life. They rescued him, patched him up and sent him along his way. Then came another and another and many more. The fishermen soon realized they could not simply keep rescuing people this way and decided to find out what was happening upstream which caused these people to fall into the water. When they went upstream, they found that people were often drawn to the edge of a cliff to look at the majestic river beneath, but there was no safe way for them to do this. So the fishermen worked with the community to build a fence at the edge of the cliff. There were still people who fell, but the numbers dropped significantly.”

The majestic river symbolizes all our good life we have in Singapore. Good life often leads to needless food intake and sedentary life style, aggravating and complicating many chronic diseases which come with longer life expectancy in our country. Through the effort of our Ministry of Health, we already have a good healthcare's safety network upstream, but more could be done to further strengthen upstream prevention, so that our downstream intervention, in acute care institutions or at tertiary care setting, could be better utilized and optimized.

To have highly trained Family Medicine Physicians in our Academy's family is a logical move and long overdue. I am glad to be at the right place and the right time, to work with A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock, President of the College of Family Physicians Singapore, and many senior Academicians including A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan and Dr Lee Suan Yew, to facilitate the creation of the Chapter of Family Medicine Physicians within the Academy. I look forward to have a stronger collaboration between the Academy and the College of Family Physicians, Singapore, through this newly formed Chapter.

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.

Let me also congratulate our 12 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 very 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.

Last but not least, the Academy will also present the Annals Gold Reviewers and Best Publication Awards to recipients who have made outstanding contributions to the Annals of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore. Congratulations and thank you for the excellent work in furthering the exchange of scientific knowledge and information. I would like to encourage all Fellow Academicians to continue supporting the Annals by contributing as reviewers and/or submitting good scientific work and articles for publication.

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.