



# **ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, SINGAPORE**

PATRON: PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

**ADDRESS BY GUEST-OF-HONOUR**

**PROFESSOR LIM SHIH HUI**

**MASTER, ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, SINGAPORE**

**Conferment Ceremony of the Chapter of Cardiothoracic Surgeons  
of the College of Surgeons, Singapore**

24 November 2012, Conrad Centennial Singapore

Dr Sayampanathan, President, College of Surgeons, Singapore,

Dr Lim Chong Hee, Chairman, Chapter of Cardiothoracic Surgeons,

Dr Lee Chuen Neng, Fellow, Academy of Medicine, Singapore,

Fellows of the College and the Academy of Medicine, Singapore,

Distinguish Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here to witness the Conferment Ceremony of the Chapter of Cardiothoracic Surgeons of the College of Surgeons, Singapore.

I have been given 10 minutes to give this address so that I will not interrupt your dinner for too long. Perhaps I shall quote an old saying that many Roman orators used before making a speech: "There is a time when nothing must be said, and a time when something must be said – but never a time when everything must be said." I promise not to pack everything in my 10-minute's speech.

Since we have overseas friends who might not be familiar with the organization of the Academy, Colleges and Chapters, I shall bring you back to 1957 when the Academy of Medicine was established as the only professional body for medical and dental specialists in Singapore.

Sir Arthur Gordon Ransome, a Physician with a strong interest in neurology, was our first Master.

Professor Yeoh Ghim Seng was one of the 34 founding members of the Academy. From the College of Surgeons' website, I learnt that under the leadership of Professor Yeoh, cardiac surgery continued its early development in the Surgical A Unit of the Singapore General Hospital from 1955 to 1962. Professor Yeoh first performed closed heart surgery in 1959. In 1960, Professor Yeoh and Dr Ben Eismann performed the first open heart operation under hypothermia. In 1970, Prof Yeoh was appointed the Speaker of our Parliament when he was an eminent surgeon. He served as the Speaker for 19 years, one of the longest serving Speakers of any parliament in the world.

As the Academy continued to grow in the 1960s, there were more than enough numbers of physicians and surgeons to warrant the formation of specialty Chapters. In 1966, the first 2 Chapters were formed, namely the Chapter of Physicians and the Chapter of Surgeons. Subsequently another 8 Chapters were established within the Academy.

For almost 40 years, all Chapters were administered by a 5- or 6-member Executive Committee. Under such organizational structure, it was grossly inadequate for any Chapter to carry out the professional development of its various specialists, especially for a multi-specialty Chapter like the Chapter of Surgeons.

In 2004, there was a major restructuring of the Academy. Six bigger Chapters were transformed into Colleges, still under the umbrella of the Academy. Of the 6 new Colleges, 3 were multi-specialty Colleges, and the College of Surgeons, Singapore was one of them. With the transformation of the Chapter of Surgeons into the College of Surgeons, 11 Chapters were created and one of them was the Chapter of Cardiothoracic Surgeons.

Such transformation in 2004 was both tactical and strategic, as the formation of Chapters within the new Colleges provided a structure for further development and growth of specialties and sub-specialties within the Academy. The Academy has now grown to be the largest specialists' organization with more than 2,400 Fellows in 9 Colleges and 3 Chapters.

The Chapter of the Cardiothoracic Surgeons now have 30 Fellows, which constitute 71% of the 42 Cardiothoracic Surgeons in Singapore. For your information, less than 60% of medical

specialists in Singapore are Fellows of the Academy. Therefore, your Chapter has done better than many other specialties in attracting specialists to join.

Like our country Singapore, you do not need to be constrained by the physical size of your College or the number of Fellows your Chapter has. Small countries can have big dreams. With vision, passion and courage, you can accomplish great things. Remember the old saying: "Aim for the stars, and if you don't succeed, you will land pretty high anyway."

To be conferred Distinguish Surgeons of the College of Surgeons this evening has a very special meaning. I could not agree more when your President Dr Sayampanathan told me that the main reason to confer Fellowship is to recognise and value our overseas friends' contributions to the setting of a high standard of surgical practice in Singapore.

For your College and the Chapter to grow and stay relevant in the field of surgeries in Singapore, you need, not only good leadership, but also to identify fully committed Fellows who are willing to sacrifice their time for the College and the Chapters. For those of you in the audience who have spare capacity, higher capability, or both, please do not waste your talent but come forward to serve our society, our people, our profession or our nation, just like Prof Yeoh Ghim Seng. As Master of the Academy, I wish many of you do not just serve your Chapter and the College, but come to the council of the Academy when you finish your national service in your Chapter and your College.

On a lighter note, if you have an interest in Neurology like our Sir Arthur Gordon Ransome, you could become the Master of the Academy of Medicine. But if you are a surgeon, not only you can become the Master one day, but also your surgical training prepares you well to become eminent politician, like Prof Yeoh. For those surgical trainees and younger surgeons in the audience, I could assure you that you are in the correct profession. However, you might have to switch your career to be a Gynaecologist and Obstetrician to be the Patron of our Academy.

In closing, I wish to commend Dr Sayampanathan and Dr Lim Chong Hee for their leadership in bringing our surgical specialists to reach this great milestone in Singapore. I wish you all the best in bringing the College and the Chapter to a greater height in the years to come.

Thank you.