

Address by Master, Academy of Medicine, Singapore at the Opening Ceremony of the 39th Singapore-Malaysia Congress of Medicine and Induction Ceremony (Celebrating 100 Years of Medical Education)

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Our Guest of Honour, the Honourable Minister for Health, Mr Khaw Boon Wan and Mrs Khaw; Professor Dato' Mrs Kew, President of the 39th Singapore-Malaysia Congress of Medicine and Master, Academy of Medicine, Malaysia; Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Opening Ceremony of the 39th Singapore-Malaysia Congress of Medicine and the Induction Comitia of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore.

May I first on behalf of both Academies thank the Minister for so kindly consenting to be our Guest of Honour this evening. Thank you, Minister Sir, for your extremely kind gesture.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of many distinguished guests, our Parliamentary Secretary, Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman and Mrs Maliki; the Permanent Secretary, Mr Moses Lee and Mrs Lee; DMS, Prof Satku and Mrs Satku; many heads of sister organisations and institutions and Presidents of overseas sister Colleges, as well as many overseas distinguished speakers.

To each and everyone, thank you for the honour of your presence, which adds colour and significance to our conference and celebration. I am particularly grateful to our sister Academy of Medicine for consenting to hold the 39th Congress in Singapore instead of Malaysia, so that we can commemorate 100 years of medical education together. Singapore tertiary education began with the medical school and students from both sides of the causeway were the founding pioneers. The links and bonds between our medical fraternity are strong and lasting.

The presence of an international community reminds us of the universality and internationality of health care and medicine. In the search for medical knowledge, there are no borders and in the sharing of expertise, there are no boundaries. In the practice of medicine, we are a family of communities.

This year marks the 100th year of the founding of our medical school on 3 July 1905, which was then called the Straits and Federated Malay States Government Medical School; through the years, it underwent many

metamorphosis to evolve into the Faculty of Medicine, NUS. The Congress theme, "Celebrating 100 Years of Medical Education", underlines this rich history. We are proud of the great heritage and achievement of our medical education system, and the many great men and women who have walked through the doors of this great institution and we pay tribute to them. One hundred years is a brief moment in time, but it is a significant giant milestone in the short history of our nation.

While we are proud of our achievements today, we have many challenges ahead – health care in general, and the Academies, in particular, face many complex problems. Modern technology brings about the need to use it wisely and cost effectively. Industrialisation and economic realities are necessarily influencing the planning and practice of medicine. The need for the maintenance of professionalism, ethical practice and moral responsibility to our patients must never be lost in this hectic industrialised and competitive world. Service to patients is still our top priority.

As the great Dr Albert Schweitzer puts it: "I do not know which one of you will truly be happy but this much I know, he who has learn how to serve, will find happiness." Medicine gives you that opportunity.

This evening we are also honoured to induct 14 distinguished presidents and fellows of our sister overseas colleges into the family of the Academy – we thank them for accepting our Fellowship. We are also very pleased to induct 105 new Inductees, many of whom have just completed their exit examinations.

To my young new fellow Academicians, I have these simple thoughts to share with you. You have now achieved the title of specialists, you've earned it. But with that honour comes added responsibilities and even a higher standard of practice, professionalism and dedication.

You have reached the top of the hill, but you are at the bottom of a new mountain ready to carry your career to greater heights. While you are becoming better and better, knowing more and more about less and less – never forget to treat the human being as a whole, never mistake the

disease for the patient.

Remind ourselves that not all diseases can be cured, but all patients can be given care. Every patient is a fellow human being in need of your personal care.

My young new Inductees and fellow Academicians, medicine today is experiencing tremendous change and evolution. Is medicine still a profession, or is it a business? I think medicine is a profession practising in a changing business world – but more than that medicine must remain a calling – of the highest order. No doubt countless problems lie ahead, problems of economics, professional standards, ethical issues, continuous professional development, etc.,

etc., etc. But let us all together, look at these problems as challenges, and challenges as opportunities for us to improve ourselves. Together with our health care administrators, let us look at these challenges as an opportunity to advance our health care system to even greater heights of quality, that is efficient, holistic, cost efficient and compassionate.

Through medicine, let us strive to not only add years to life but also add life to the years added.

Finally, let me thank the Organising Committee from both sides of the causeway and wish you all a very pleasant and educational congress ahead.

Thank you.