

Address by the Master, Academy of Medicine, Singapore at the 2000 Annual Induction Ceremony—The EQ & IQ of Specialist Doctors

Y C Chee, *FAMS, FRCP (Lond), FRACP*

Fellow colleagues, new Fellows, ladies and gentlemen:

First, let me warmly welcome you to this pristine auditorium with its well preserved ceiling architectural details. Probably none of the new Fellows is old enough to remember that this was the old Allen and Farris Lecture Theatres of the Faculty of Medicine when it was at Sepoy Lines before it moved onto Kent Ridge. We need to remember and value our heritage. We can learn lessons from history to help us in the future.

Second, let me congratulate our new Fellows and welcome them wholeheartedly into our fold. We are not an old boys or girls club. We are the Academy of Medicine, Singapore. We are the pioneers of Academies of Medicine. Founded in 1957, the first master was Professor Gordon Arthur Ransome. Since then, we had seen the birth of the Academy of Law in Singapore, the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine and the Academy of the Royal Colleges in the United Kingdom. All of you, our new Fellows, have met the stringent and high standards of specialist training over the past 6 or more years and today, you and your family can be justifiably proud of your achievements. You have arrived. Your name can be boldly engraved on the Specialist Register of the Singapore Medical Council.

We are pushing for a knowledge-based economy. So is the whole world. Let me discuss IQ before I get onto EQ, both of which I feel are definitely necessary in our professions. One without the other just will not do.

Knowledge comes in many forms and needs to be dealt with in different ways according to its type. The particular form and nature of knowledge affects the way we identify it, find it, capture it, index or label it, store it, transfer it, disseminate it, apply it, monitor it, update it and deal with it when it becomes obsolete. What a mouthful but entirely true as we seek to grapple with the quantum leaps in medicine.

Knowledge has 4 levels. Data is the most basic level of knowledge. It consists of independent facts that may have no meaning in themselves. Most of the current technology related to knowledge, such as data warehousing, is only useful in managing data. One level up is information.

Information is data plus context. Information involves perceiving trends, patterns and developments. The third level is validation which is the process by which information is proven. This validated knowledge can be relied upon. It comes in two main forms. “Know-why” is a series of causal linkages that explain a phenomenon. “Know-how” is more

amorphous and difficult to capture. It could be the ability of a person to lead others or to give good feedback. Knowledge can be explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge can be written down and shared on paper, on discs, or on film. It is the knowledge that goes into textbooks, journals, procedures and protocols. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, exists in the minds and practice of competent, knowledgeable individuals, or among a group of people. This knowledge is more difficult to capture and transmit.

The highest level in this 4-layered pyramid is intelligence. Intelligence is knowledge plus timely action. Intelligence is never absolutely integrated or complete. It is that small set of warning flags that goes up when specific conditions click into place. Although the information is incomplete, it allows you to take action because you know what your boundary conditions are.

All of you have high IQs. Why? At “A” levels, all of you scored 4 distinctions or more, some even 9 or 11 As. So there is no doubt you have a bank full of IQ assets which have grown over the last 10 years at compounding interest rates. You are all rich in IQ – extremely intelligent human beings serving in the medical profession.

What about EQ? Is IQ destiny? Is not our view of human intelligence far too narrow? Do not our emotions play a far greater role in thought, decision making and individual success? Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy and social deftness. These are the qualities that mark people who excel; whose relationships flourish, who are the stars in society. We need to worry about our EQ bank account and build up its assets.

Emotional intelligence can be defined in 5 domains. The first is knowing one’s emotions. Self-awareness is the keystone of emotional intelligence. People with greater certainty about their feelings are better pilots of their lives. The second is managing emotions. Handling feelings so they are appropriate is an ability that builds on self-awareness. Basic emotional skill means the capacity to soothe oneself, to shake off rampant anxiety, gloom or irritability. People who are poor in this ability are constantly battling feelings of distress, while those who excel in it can bounce back far more quickly from life’s setbacks and upsets. The third is motivating oneself. Marshalling emotions in the service of a goal are essential for paying attention, for self-motivation and mastery, and for creativity. Emotional self-control, delaying satisfaction and stifling impulsiveness underline accomplishment of every sort.

The fourth is recognising emotions in others. Empathy, another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness, is the fundamental “people skill.” People who are empathic are more attuned to the subtle social signals that indicate what others need or want. This makes them better at callings such as the caring profession to which we all belong. The fifth is handling relationships. The act of handling relationships is, in large part, a skill in managing emotions in others. These are the abilities that undergird popularity, leadership and interpersonal effectiveness. People who excel in these skills do well at anything that relies on interacting smoothly with others. This is what the doctor-patient relationship needs and you must provide all these factors to make it a successful and beautiful relationship.

So in contrasting those with high IQ with those with high EQ, this is the picture that emerges.

The high IQ pure type (that is, setting aside EQ) is almost a caricature of the intellectual, adept in the realm of mind but inept in the personal world. If male, he is typified by a wide range of intellectual interests and abilities. He is ambitious and productive, predictable and dogged, and untroubled by concerns about himself. He also tends to be critical and condescending, fastidious and inhibited, uneasy with sexuality and sensual experience, inexpressive and detached, and emotionally bland and cold.

By contrast, men with high EQ are socially poised, outgoing and cheerful, not prone to fearfulness or worried rumination. They have a notable capacity for commitment to people or causes, for taking responsibility and for having an ethical outlook; they are sympathetic and caring in their relationships; their emotional life is rich, but appropriate; they are comfortable with themselves, others and the social universe they live in.

Pure high IQ women have the expected intellectual confidence, are fluent in expressing their thoughts, value intellectual matters, and have a wide range of intellectual and aesthetic interests. They also tend to be introspective, prone to anxiety, rumination and guilt and hesitate to express their anger openly (though they do so indirectly).

High EQ women by contrast, tend to be assertive and express their feelings directly, and to feel positive about themselves; life holds meaning for them. Like the men, they are outgoing and gregarious, and express their feelings appropriately (rather than say, in outbursts they later regret); they adapt well to stress. Their social poise lets them easily reach out to new people; they are comfortable enough with

themselves to be playful, spontaneous and open to sensual experience. Unlike the women purely high in IQ, they rarely feel anxious, or guilty, or sink into rumination.

These portraits are extreme, as all of us mix IQ and EQ in varying degrees. We have both cognitive and emotional intelligence. Of the two, EQ adds far more of the qualities that makes us more fully human.

I am sure we can do with more EQ in each of us. IQ we already have a lot of and we do not need a formal Mensa test to evaluate our level of IQ. But let us balance high scores of IQ with high scores on EQ also. How?

Many a time we hear that someone’s attitude is bad. Why? The crux is the lack of listening skills. In any social interaction, there is listening and communication. After all, people must listen to each other; we doctors to our patients and their relatives in order to do our job, improve outcome and be successful. There are five stages in the listening continuum. The first four stages in ascending order of effectiveness and, all within one’s own frame of reference are, ignoring, pretend listening, selective listening and attentive listening. The final step is empathic listening and this takes the other person’s frame of reference into our consideration.

There are 3 keys to effective listening. One—begin listening to others from a neutral, open-minded state. This allows you to really concentrate and focus on what others are saying to you. Seek first to understand. The proof of empathic listening is when you can restate what you have heard and the one you listened to agrees with you. The one you listened to must feel understood by you.

Two—pay attention not only to the logical content of what someone is saying but also how they say it, that is, how they feel about the subject under discussion. If you listen for emotions rather than only words, you will absorb both and your understanding will be deeper. And three—respond in such a way that you prove you are taking the other person seriously. Demonstrate respect for their points of view.

Let me conclude. To be successful, you need more than IQ which you already have. More EQ is better than less. Performance and success depend on more than brilliance. In our caring profession, EQ is vital to the success of the doctor-patient relationship. May we build up our EQ bank account in days to come. Congratulations once again on your achievement as a specialist and may you be a successful specialist.