

# Address by the Master, Academy of Medicine, Singapore at the 1999 Annual Induction Ceremony

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

Distinguished Guests, Fellow Academicians, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this evening's induction ceremony held in this Auditorium which was home to our only Medical School before it moved over to Kent Ridge. As we gaze upwards and admire the intricate masonry, let us be grateful for our medical heritage, that the beautiful workmanship has stood the test of time and we are able to enjoy the fruits of others' labour. So it is with our Academy of Medicine, founded in 1957 with the motto-*Recta Sapere*—to savour the truth. Sir Arthur Gordon Ransome was the first Master.

Today's proceedings are possible because there are new specialists to be conferred the Fellowship of the Academy. With the addition of 100 new fellows into our Fellowship, the Academy stands 1642 strong, representing 33% of the medical profession. It is my hope that all specialists belong to the Academy so that all efforts in the Academy's mission will be focussed and concentrated. Specialists need to be united to face the coming century.

To all you new inductees, on behalf of Council, may I extend to you a very warm entry into the fold of the Academy. Today is your day of rejoicing, marking the culmination of your past 6 years or more of specialist training. At last you are no more a trainee. You are free to practise independent specialty medicine. You have completed the arduous training programme with activities and experience as prescribed. You have completed specialty exit certification. You are eligible to proudly state FAMS (Specialty) after your MBBS degree and let all know your specialist standing and your specialty. And you are eligible to be on the public Register of Specialists of the Singapore Medical Council. These are no mean nor small achievements and everyone of you deserves a huge pat on your back and our heartiest congratulations for having arrived.

It was only during the past year that your Council had finalised proposed constitutional amendments that will affect how the FAMS is to be awarded. These will be presented at the coming AGM on 26 June 1999 to which all of you are invited. It will be held in this Auditorium. The amendments will allow our advanced trainees on the successful completion of exit certification to be automatically eligible for the award of FAMS (Specialty). It will be akin to you passing an Exam of an overseas Royal College, whereupon on payment of the appropriate fees, you will become a Member or Fellow of that College. More important, to remain entitled to use the MRCP, FRCS or whatever, you need to remain current in paying your annual subscriptions. Likewise for all Fellows of our Academy, and I would urge you to fulfil this responsibility. There is provision made for those removed from Fellowship due to nonpayment of subscriptions to be reinstated, but I am sure that is not an experience you will want to go through.

As you are aware, the Academy has purchased 142 Neil Road and if all goes according to plan, we will relocate there in the year 2000. This is the first time the Academy will have a house to call her own and all of you have a contribution to make towards its viability now and in the long term. It will be as it were your inheritance from your senior Fellows.

Medicine is an honourable profession and you are expected to be honourable men and women practising current up-to-date medicine with high ethical and moral standards. Money is not the root of all evil but the love of money is. There is nothing wrong with rich doctors provided they earn their keep honestly or had unlimited wealth to start with. Society has high expectations of doctors that our Hippocratic traditions and values of altruism, compassion and selflessness should be upheld, that we will care for our patients as our very own relatives and provide the comfort and hope even if cure is not possible.

As the younger generation of specialists, you would do well to seek out your older colleague's advice and expertise should you feel out of depth with any particular patient. Experience counts. Clinical judgement is not totally learnt over 10 years of practice. It still pays to be humble-not pride with knowledge but humility with wisdom. We can hope to be always right for our patients' benefit but we will not always be proven right by time and events. Nonetheless, let us have high moral and ethical principles to live by in private and in public for we are not Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. We are doctors 24 hours a day, every day, at work as well as on holiday. We are part of the 200-doctor cohort of each year privileged to attend medical school in Singapore, thus representing 0.5% of each year's 40,000 babies. And as specialists we represent 40% of this 0.5%, or 0.2% of our age cohort in Singapore. Knowing therefore our privileged place in society, we must shoulder our responsibilities and may I urge all the new Academicians as you take your Pledge to always abide by the principles and guiding philosophy of this institution to bring dignity, respect and prestige to our profession.

Thank you. 4 May 1999