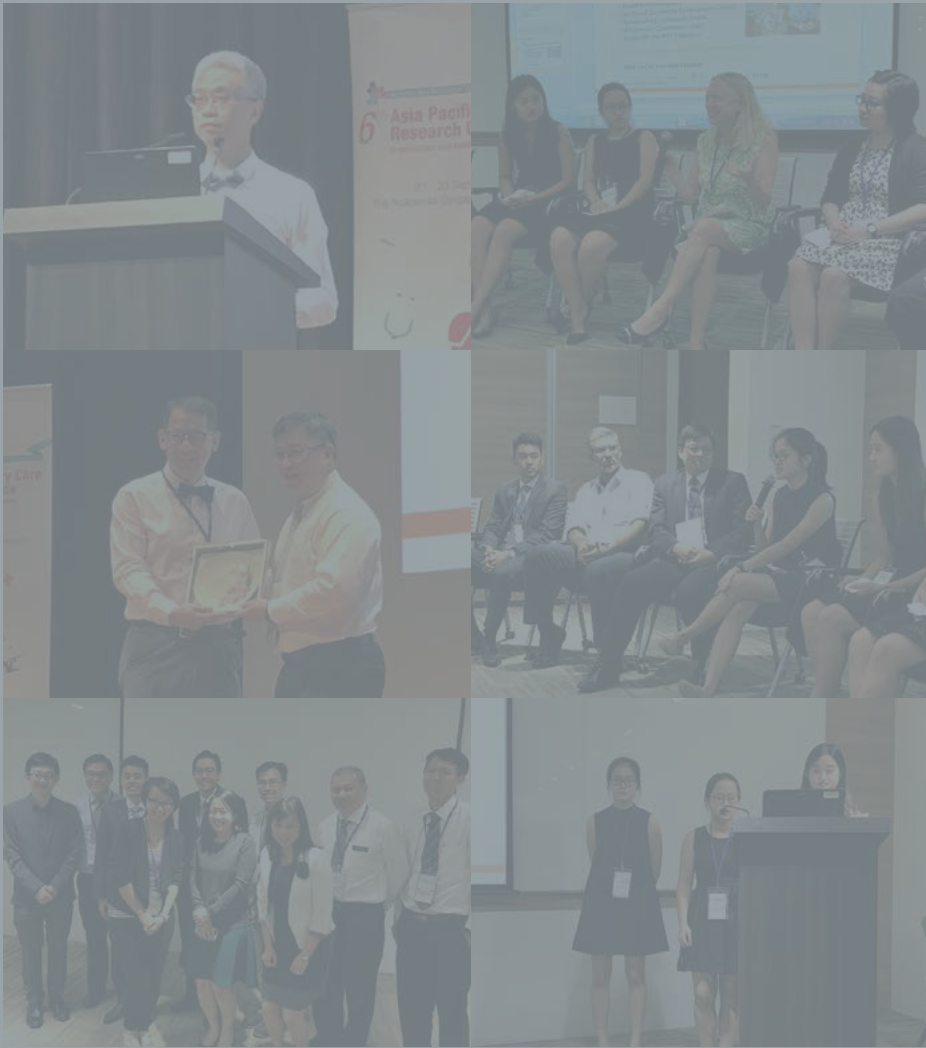


(continued from Page 5: 6th Asia Pacific Primary Care Research Conference)



All images courtesy of SingHealth Duke-NUS Family Medicine ACP

poster and best oral presentation awards added to the excitement of the conference.

High profile educators and researchers presented their talks including keynote lectures on “Nudges for healthy living”, “Pushing the boundaries of Family Medicine” as well as “Promoting careers in Family Medicine”. Participants were spoilt for choice in the multiple workshops that offered a buffet menu ranging from psychometrics, quality improvement, education, ethics, meta-analysis, scale development and validation, Evidence-based medicine (EBM) and health interventions. A roundtable discussion on conducting complex intervention trials in primary care settings was scheduled. This had serve to encourage and support high quality research in family medicine as well as to link up those with common interests to participate in collaborative research projects.

The time is ripe to promote Family Medicine and Primary Care as an academic specialty and to deliver EBM for best patient care. Come, help us realise our dreams and goals for Family Medicine!

■ CM

# Enhancing Family Physician Development

*Mr Ng How Yue, 2nd Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Health, was the Guest-of-Honour at the Family Medicine Convocation Ceremony and Dinner, on 18 November 2017. He addressed the guests with the following speech.*

Dr Tan Tze Lee, President,  
College of Family Physician Singapore,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening

## INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to join you all this evening at the Family Medicine Convocation Ceremony and Dinner.

I would first like to congratulate this year’s graduates on successfully completing your course of study and attaining your postgraduate Family Medicine qualifications. This is an important milestone in your career and in your journey of lifelong learning.



Mr Ng How Yue, 2nd Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health in his opening address.

That said, there is still much to learn and an exciting path ahead, as you continue to hone your practical clinical skills and expertise.

I urge you to remember that you play a critical role as a Family Physician – you are the first contact point of primary care for patients across the nation; and you are also a pivotal force in spotting and tackling challenges facing our healthcare system.

### **PRIMARY CARE TRANSFORMATION TO MEET EVOLVING HEALTHCARE NEEDS**

We are moving into an important milestone in Singapore's healthcare journey. We are living longer, more fulfilling lives. The average lifespan of Singaporeans today is 83 years, 15 years more than in 1971, when the College of Family Physicians was first formed. This is a laudable achievement and testament to the strong foundation of our healthcare system.

But there is also the reality that we are a fast-ageing population. By 2030, one in five Singaporeans will be above the age of 65, and this year's annual Population in Brief report shows that we are greying at a faster pace compared to the last decade. Coupled with the rapidly rising burden of chronic diseases, our healthcare resources are being stretched and tested.

The current healthcare system is largely hospital-centric, and the handling and management of patient care tends to be disease-specific. For patients struggling with multiple chronic conditions and requiring multi-disciplinary care, the treatment journey is often fragmented and complex.

In order to ensure that healthcare remains accessible, affordable and sustainable, primary care needs to be transformed to meet the evolving healthcare needs of our population. As a community of providers, this entails a shared vision to shift 'Beyond Hospital to Community' – towards more patient-centric care, with holistic and continual care coordinated by and anchored in the community.

### **ROLES OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS**

This change in approach has implications for Family Physicians and how you define their work.

Our vision of 'One Singaporean, One Family Doctor' encapsulates the key roles a Family Physician plays in a patient's life and that of his or her family.

Family Physicians are uniquely placed to not only be an integral part of our communities but form long-term relationships with patients and their families. This allows you to play many roles – as a confidante to your patients, a trusted adviser to their caregivers navigating the healthcare system and as guardians of basic health within the community.

Given Family Physicians' ability to form long-standing doctor-patient relationships to develop deep insights into patient preferences, you are also uniquely placed to more effectively educate, motivate and empower patients to make healthier lifestyle choices. Well-trained Family Physicians can provide the crucial link that will enable a smooth transition between acute and community-based care, and are an integral component in Singapore's transformative efforts to bring patient care closer to home.

To facilitate this shift, I would encourage the Family Medicine fraternity to define your roles beyond what is often circumscribed by specific care settings. To partner patients in their care trajectory and life cycle, some Family Physicians may need to perform, for example, dual sector roles in future:

Anchored in the community, and also reaching out to wherever your patients may require your advice and continuity of care, be it in an Acute hospital, Community Hospital or within a palliative setting.

These are exciting choices for the current and future cohorts of Family Physicians to think through, and to redefine themselves. Less borders, more integration as part of a larger, networked community team.

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### ENHANCING FAMILY PHYSICIAN DEVELOPMENT

MOH has taken steps in recent years to better equip primary care providers for chronic disease management. This has been done through the development of Family Medicine Clinics, Community Health Centres, and more recently, Primary Care Networks. We have also enhanced financing schemes such as the Community Health Assist Scheme, Chronic Disease Management Programme, and Screen for Life to ensure that healthcare remains affordable and accessible to all Singaporeans.

Another key enabler we have committed to is promoting and enhancing the postgraduate Family Medicine training programme.

To this end, MOH has appointed a Workgroup to review the Family Medicine residency programmes to ensure that quality Family Medicine training reaches more doctors.

Among its various deliberations, the Workgroup has outlined the expected roles and attributes of Family Physicians. This includes providing holistic primary care in the community, as well as coordinating and integrating care for patients where the involvement of other healthcare professionals or care settings are required.

In addition, as part of our ongoing efforts to train more Family Physicians to be a key enabler of primary care transformation, the Ministry has been working closely with the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS) to review and enhance its Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM) programme, to ensure trainees are equipped with knowledge in Family Medicine practice as a base.

In line with the changing patient profile, the revised GDFM will take into consideration the changing disease patterns in our country, and place more emphasis on caring for older persons, patients with multiple chronic diseases including mental health, and patients who are

recently discharged from acute hospitals. The training will also feature new aspects including transitional care and extra training specific to boost the competency of Family Physicians in certain settings, such as nursing homes, community hospitals and home care.



While strong technical skills are a key part of composite care, the role of effective and empathetic communications cannot be underestimated. Family Physicians need to be skilled communicators, who are able to act as health counsellors and advocates for their patients, and to guide them in initiating and sustaining lifestyle changes, as well as adhering to treatments.

Most of all, Family Physicians will need to step up and take charge, to steer the fraternity's vision to one that remains relevant to the evolving needs of the population, and to groom the next generation of young leaders that will keep the proud traditions of Family Medicine alive.

### CONCLUSION

Our healthcare system and Family Medicine have both come a long way since the establishment of the College of Family Physicians Singapore almost half a century ago. The shift 'Beyond Hospital to Community' will depend much on how primary care can evolve to cope with the rising complexity of patient's today. I am heartened to see that so many of our young doctors are choosing this path, and all of you today will undoubtedly play a big role in shaping the future of health in Singapore.

Congratulations once more to all of our graduates today. We look forward to your continued contributions to the advancement of Family Medicine. I wish all of you the best in your noble quest. Thank you.

■ CM