



Sreenivasan Oration 2008 by Prof Ng Han Seong

Integrated Care

As reported by A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, President,
College of Family Physicians Singapore

The Sreenivasan Oration this year was given by Prof Ng Han Seong. This is a brief report on the Oration. The full-text will be published in the Singapore Family Physician in the March issue 2009.

SUPPORTER OF FAMILY MEDICINE

In the citation of Prof Ng, A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, our Vice-President, recounted the academic track record of Prof Ng. Certainly Prof Ng is well-known to the profession and well-liked by his teachers, peers, and students. He has contributed much to the training of our family physicians, and is an examiner of the MMed(Family Medicine) Examination.

FAMILY PHYSICIAN HOSPITALIST

Prof Ng's biggest contribution to family medicine is the vision and implementation of the Family Physician Hospitalist in the Singapore hospital system. Through his leadership and efforts, Prof Ng has mentored Dr Lee Kheng Hock as Head of the Department of Family Medicine & Continuing Care in Singapore General Hospital to bring into reality the first family physician hospitalist department in this part of the world. The place of the family physician in the hospital is beginning to be accepted. NUHS has also embarked on the idea of the family physician in the hospital and the idea is taking root in the other restructured hospitals as well.

INTEGRATED CARE

Prof Ng's Oration was on Integrated Care. He noted that integrated care was mentioned by several Sreenivasan Orators in the past. He sees integrated care as the solution to the health care challenges of today: ageing population; complex chronic diseases; too many specialists, too few generalists; maids as home care-givers; and piecemeal and fragmented care.

In the full care cycle of the patient across the stages of acute care, chronic care, and terminal care there is a need for care that is based on consistent treatment/management plan, adequate communication amongst providers, patient and caregivers, and some professional to own the patient. He sees the family physician to be that professional.

There are various facets that make up integrated care: co-ordination across the continuum of care in the patient's journey through the full cycle of care; the reduction of unnecessary variation in care consistently; the support care partnerships of primary care with

the community and with hospitals; the multidisciplinary and doctor-patient communication; and the outcome and value created in the provision of care.

It is in the integration of care in the elderly that the concept of integrated care has the biggest reason to be in place. Think of the frail elderly patient with multiple co-morbidities who is now saddled with a fracture of the hip. There is a need to integrate family, circle of concern and physician into patient care; to focus more on function, and less on disease; to build trust; to provide resources for care at home; and to empower health care providers. The family physician needs to be nearer to the center of action. Herein lies the place of the family physician hospitalist.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE & CONTINUING CARE

Prof Ng describes the role of the Department of Family Medicine & Continuing Care (FMCC). This Department seeks to bring in the strengths of family medicine in care co-ordination and patient-centredness into the hospital care environment. Its mission is to:

- o Provide a family physician consultation service
- o Provide and develop systems of transition care between hospital services and community services
- o Provide co-ordinated management of patients with co-morbidities in the hospital
- o Provide interface care between the hospital and primary care providers
- o Provide progressive undergraduate and postgraduate medical education
- o Conduct research in Family Medicine.

The FMCC will effect the right siting of care using a strategy of promoting care co-ordination and patient centredness.

THE TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Integrated care needs to be the prevailing vision of every provider in today's health care delivery if we are to surmount the challenges facing health care that Prof Ng enumerated at the start of his Oration. Prof Ng's take home message on integrated care is - the right care, in the right way, at the right cost, and at the right time ... consistently.

The feedback on his Oration was that he has spoken clearly on the need, the way, and the outcome expected of integrated care. **ICM**