



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

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SPEECH BY MR GAN KIM YONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AT THE SG50 APPRECIATION DINNER FOR PIONEER GPs, ON FRIDAY, 30 OCT 2015, 7PM AT GRAND COPTHORNE WATERFRONT HOTEL, WATERFRONT BALLROOM

Dr Lam Pin Min, Minister of State for Health

A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock, President, College of Family Physicians Singapore

Dr Wong Kirk Chuan, Deputy CEO, Agency for Integrated Care

CFPS Council members

Distinguished Guests,

Good evening to all of you.

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you this evening at the SG50 Appreciation Dinner for Pioneer Generation General Practitioners (GPs) co-organised by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) as well as the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS).

2. As we celebrate Singapore's Golden Jubilee this year, we gather to honour our Pioneer GPs in recognition of your efforts and support of the development of the national healthcare system for more than 50 years. I am also pleased to see the younger generation of doctors who have been instrumental in organising this evening's programme for the older generation, and they will in turn do their part to continue to develop a robust healthcare system in Singapore for all of us.



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3. It is fitting to have Associate Professor Goh Lee Gan and Dr James Chang, both pioneers who played key roles in shaping primary care in Singapore, to share with us later, from their wealth of experience in the private sector and the academic field.

The importance of GP roles in the healthcare system

4. Primary care is the foundation of our healthcare system and GPs play a significant role in our community. Since the 1960s, with the decentralisation of our outpatient care to Outpatient Dispensaries and Maternal and Child and Health Clinics, primary care has been brought increasingly closer to the community. The focus then was on providing basic healthcare services tackling issues such as infectious diseases, nutrition and family planning. Today, a large portion of our primary healthcare is provided through private medical clinics across the island, with many located within housing estates to ensure their accessibility to our patients.

5. GPs have a unique doctor-patient relationship that enables them to empower their patients to make good lifestyle choices. The trust and familiarity GPs enjoy with patients and their family members allow them to advocate for their patient's well-being,. The family doctor's holistic understanding of patient's needs is the essence of good family medicine. It is also key to keeping our care cost effective and sustainable in the long run.

6. GPs provide continuity of care throughout the patient's life journey. Increasingly, GPs work closely with our healthcare professionals in the hospitals, specialist outpatient clinics and polyclinics as their patients' needs increase and they require help to navigate the system.

7. GP skills are diverse, and GP clinics today provide a variety of services including health screening for cancer, chronic disease management programmes, immunisation, health promotion and preventive health programmes, family planning, as well as mental health care.

8. The notion of "One family, One Family Doctor" encapsulates the key role a family doctor plays in a patient's life and that of his/her family's. MOH remains committed to



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supporting primary care development, given the ever increasing role family doctors and primary care teams will play in the evolving healthcare landscape.

Honouring and thanking our Pioneer GPs

9. In 2003 and 2009, Singapore experienced firsthand nationwide epidemics of SARS and H1N1 respectively. GPs were the frontline in protecting our people and our nation, to screen suspected SARS cases and H1N1 patients, courageously facing the potential risk of exposure to the viruses even as they were steadfast in fulfilling their call of duty. We salute the healthcare teams and GPs who played a key role in successfully containing the outbreaks. And we remember our colleagues who sacrificed their lives in saving others.

10. GPs played a key role too during the episodes of heavy haze to ensure adequate care was given to patients. GPs who participated in the Haze Subsidy Scheme also help to keep their bills for their patients affordable by making use of the subsidy. To date, we have more than 600 GP clinics participating in the scheme.

11. GPs will continue to be at our frontline and be our frontline partners in safeguarding our nation's health and well-being. Our pioneer doctors, in the roles they have played during these crises, have also set a firm foundation for future doctors to build upon. I hope our young doctors and medical students who are here with us today, will be inspired by the dedicated and selfless attributes of these pioneering doctors.

CHAS and CDMP

12. In 2012, the Primary Care Partnership Scheme was significantly enhanced and became the Community Health Assist Scheme, or commonly known as CHAS.

13. CHAS has since successfully reached out to a large population of Singaporeans who can receive healthcare subsidies at participating CHAS GP clinics and dental clinics. MOH hopes to continue to build this journey of partnership to make primary healthcare seamless and accessible to all.



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14. One growing role the GPs need to play is in making good chronic disease management in the community. MOH has supported this vision in various ways. In 2006, the Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDMP) was introduced and allowed Medisave utilisation for outpatient treatment of selected chronic diseases. The Primary Care Masterplan launched in 2011 focused on integrating primary care with other healthcare settings and supporting our GPs for chronic disease management through various initiatives.

15. I greatly appreciate many of our Pioneer GPs who have embraced these changes and developments. I want to thank all of our Pioneer CHAS GPs who have come on-board this programme to help our Singaporeans.

Family medicine training in the changing healthcare landscape

16. The changing needs of our population reaffirm the importance of a regular family doctor for the family. In this regard, I applaud the efforts of our College in leading the charge by training our GPs to become highly competent, preferably with home care and transitional care training and experience, as well as equipping them with the skills to work with other healthcare professionals across an integrated healthcare system.

GP Partnership Training Award Singapore

17. In line with MOH's commitments to develop Family Medicine, I am pleased to share our new GP partnership training awards. With the ageing population, there is a need to improve the capacity of Singapore's palliative care by 2020. In 2014, MOH and the AIC co-funded and co-launched the "Intermediate and Long-Term Care – Palliative Care Training Award (ILTC-PCTA)" to attract GPs to take up the Graduate Diploma in Palliative Medicine programme.

18. Seven GPs have since received the award. With the success of ILTC-PCTA, the programme has been expanded beyond Palliative Care and will be renamed the "Community Care GP Partnership Training Award". This award will now fund two programmes – Graduate Diploma in Geriatric Medicine and Graduate Diploma in Family



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Medicine to meet the needs of the Community Care sector. We hope that this award will reach out and raise the awareness of the training opportunities amongst our GPs.

19. MOH has also initiated earlier this year for the first time, a new subsidy scheme for GPs interested in pursuing the College's Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) Programme B course. We hope that with this funding support, more GPs will step forward to continue to pursue postgraduate training to meet the increasing complexity of our patients' needs, and to push the frontier of Family Medicine.

Conclusion

20. In closing, for our young doctors and doctors-to-be, as you embark on joining the Family Medicine family, I hope you continue the proud legacy of our Pioneer GPs and step up to take on the responsibility to serve our nation.

21. To our Pioneer GPs, a heartfelt thank you all once again for your immense contributions, commitment and years of dedicated service.

22. On this note, thank you very much and enjoy your dinner.



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