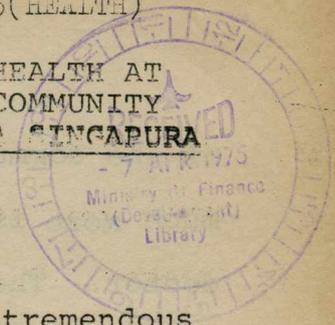


SPEECH BY DR ANG KOK PENG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION ON "THE DOCTOR AND COMMUNITY SERVICES" ON SUNDAY 16 MARCH 1975 AT 5 PM AT PLAZA SINGAPURA



Medicine as an occupation has undergone tremendous changes since the days of the shaman who also doubled as priest and sorcerer in his primitive community. The combination of medical and priestly functions was not without advantages: it gave the shaman's prescribed treatments more efficacy as they were presumed by the people to have received divine backing during the magical rites and incantations that formed part of the treatment. There must have been many who were cured more through their faith in the divine backing than through the real efficacy of the medicine.

Although a doctor does not pretend to have divine backing for his prescribed treatments, he will agree that the faith of the patients in him goes a long way to help the process of recovery from illness.

While the shaman could rely on the general ignorance and superstition of his patients for acceptance of the non-medical aspect of the treatment, a doctor has to win the confidence and respect of his patients through his proven skill and reputation and the way he handles the patients. Just as the patient's awe was an essential part of the shaman's treatment, the rapport between the doctor and his patient is very much an integral part of modern medicine.

True the doctor does not have the demi-god status of the shaman, his position in the community is nevertheless relatively high. This is so by virtue of his special knowledge and the nature of his work which concerns the health and well-being

of the community. Also because of the nature of his work, much more is expected of him than his technical skill as a doctor. There is a Chinese saying (医如父母心) which roughly translated means that a doctor should treat a patient with the same concern as that shown by a father and mother toward their beloved child. Because of such an expectation it is not enough for a doctor to render purely professional service alone; he has to show compassion for his suffering patients.

Traditionally, his profession calls for dedication and his services cannot be adequately expressed in terms of dollars and cents. The real reward is in a personal satisfaction of having relieved sufferings and saved lives. His high standing in society has withstood the test of time while the status of members of a certain profession has suffered successive devaluations especially during the past few decades, partly due to events external to the profession and partly due to a dilution of the quality of people entering the profession and loss of dedication of its members.

The high quality of health service in Singapore to-day is due to the efforts and dedication of a large number of very able and well qualified personnel. It is a service that has received favourable comments from local and outside quarters. However, we should not be complacent but should continue to strive for excellence and contribute our share to maintaining and raising the quality of the health service in this region.

Before I conclude I would like to congratulate the organisers of this exhibition for their splendid work. And now I have great pleasure in declaring the exhibition open.