

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (HEALTH AND CULTURE), ON THE OCCASION OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH COURTESY VARIETY SHOW-CUM-FINALE AT THE SCHOOL OF NURSING AUDITORIUM, SINGAPORE GENERAL HOSPITAL ON THURSDAY 26 JULY 1984 AT 7.00 PM

We are now at the close of the Courtesy Month of July. This does not mean that come August, we put courtesy to rest. Courtesy is not something we reserve only for Courtesy Month. It should have by now become a trait that is second nature to each and every one of us and manifested in our words and deeds. In the health care service, personal interaction is the rule rather than the exception, so that courtesy becomes a necessary ingredient in our relationship with patients and relatives.

No one wants to be sick or, worse, to be hospitalised. Patients and their families are so often anxious and stressful in a hospital environment. They are anxious and uncertain of their own or their loved ones' medical condition. They also face a whole set of hospital rules and regulations which appear both strange and restrictive to them. All these make them feel very vulnerable. Some may react by becoming apparently demanding and discourteous, while others by becoming particularly sensitive.

We are in a position to allay their fears and uncertainties. Patients and their families could be considered guests to our environment. As hosts, we should take the initiative to put them at ease on what is to them unfamiliar ground. In the Asian tradition, hospitality

means care and concern, and, where applicable, putting guests' needs above our own. In the hospital context, it means respect for the patients' individuality and dignity, being sensitive to their fears and needs, taking time to lend a helping hand and a listening ear, and to take some trouble to explain to the patients their medical problems, the planned course of treatment and prognosis. All these must come from the heart. Patients can see through any act that we put up. Caring persons have the pre-disposition to be courteous. Courtesy is not an attribute that one is born with but one that is developed. It gets better with practice. Such kindness of heart when expressed in caring, sensitive, considerate and tactful ways will help to make our patients and their families feel assured and respected as individuals and not merely regarded as "cases".

All these messages will be subtly conveyed in the items presented in tonight's Courtesy Variety Show-cum-Finale. The response for this Show has been very encouraging. I understand a total of 130 staff members from our hospitals and departments have put a lot of hard work into it.

All of you must be looking forward to the Show. While enjoying the Show, do take notice and, where possible items convey. Have an enjoyable evening.

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