

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICITY DIVISION · MINISTRY OF CULTURE · CITY HALL SINGAPORE 6

National Archives and
Records Centre, Singapore.

19 MAY 1979

MC/MAY/19/79 (Health)

Acc. No. NARC

79 0024 7

SPEECH BY DR TOH CHIN CHYE, MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AT THE
32ND WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY ON "TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN
THE FIELD OF HEALTH AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES" IN
GENEVA, 10 - 15 MAY 1979

Over a five-year period 1974-1978 Singapore offered training facilities for 638 WHO trainees. A document on technical co-operation was issued by the Western Pacific region but no mention was made of Singapore. It was unfortunate as this omission made Singapore appear to be unco-operative.

Although Singapore belongs to the Western Pacific region of WHO the majority of WHO sponsored trainees came from South East Asia, South Asia, East Mediterranean countries including Bhutan which is not a member of WHO. In addition Singapore receives trainees under the Colombo Plan and Asean.

The error of omission is due to WHO's grouping of countries which do not coincide with new political and geographical interests. I would suggest that WHO co-ordinates the work of its different regional centres so that member countries of WHO are aware that training facilities in Singapore are not necessarily confined to the Western Pacific region countries.

From our experience the majority of WHO trainees favour practical attachments, short organized courses or observation visits. They include doctors, dentists, nurses and pharmacists directly involved with health care to others who are public health inspectors, environmental engineers, drug rehabilitation officers and health education officers.

WHO's call for "Health For All By The Year 2000" can be achieved more rapidly by emphasizing training in providing environmental health particularly in the areas of sanitation and water supplies. The Alma Ata meeting in 1978 on primary health care has been a stimulus to providing

basic health facilities, not only to less developed countries but also to Singapore, a city-state. Primary health means different gradations of health care according to the economic and social circumstances of different countries in providing facilities for diagnosis and treatment of the sick by doctors or by para-medical personnel. In Singapore we found that treatment at out-patient clinics, accident and emergency departments and specialist out-patient clinics was most cost-effective. Hospitalisation is expensive and consumes the greatest part of health expenditure.

Singapore is placing emphasis on primary health care which includes curative treatment, home nursing, preventive medicine and health education. We can offer WHO trainees or fellows facilities for training and observation in this area.
