

“What is General/ Family Practice?” Let us define it

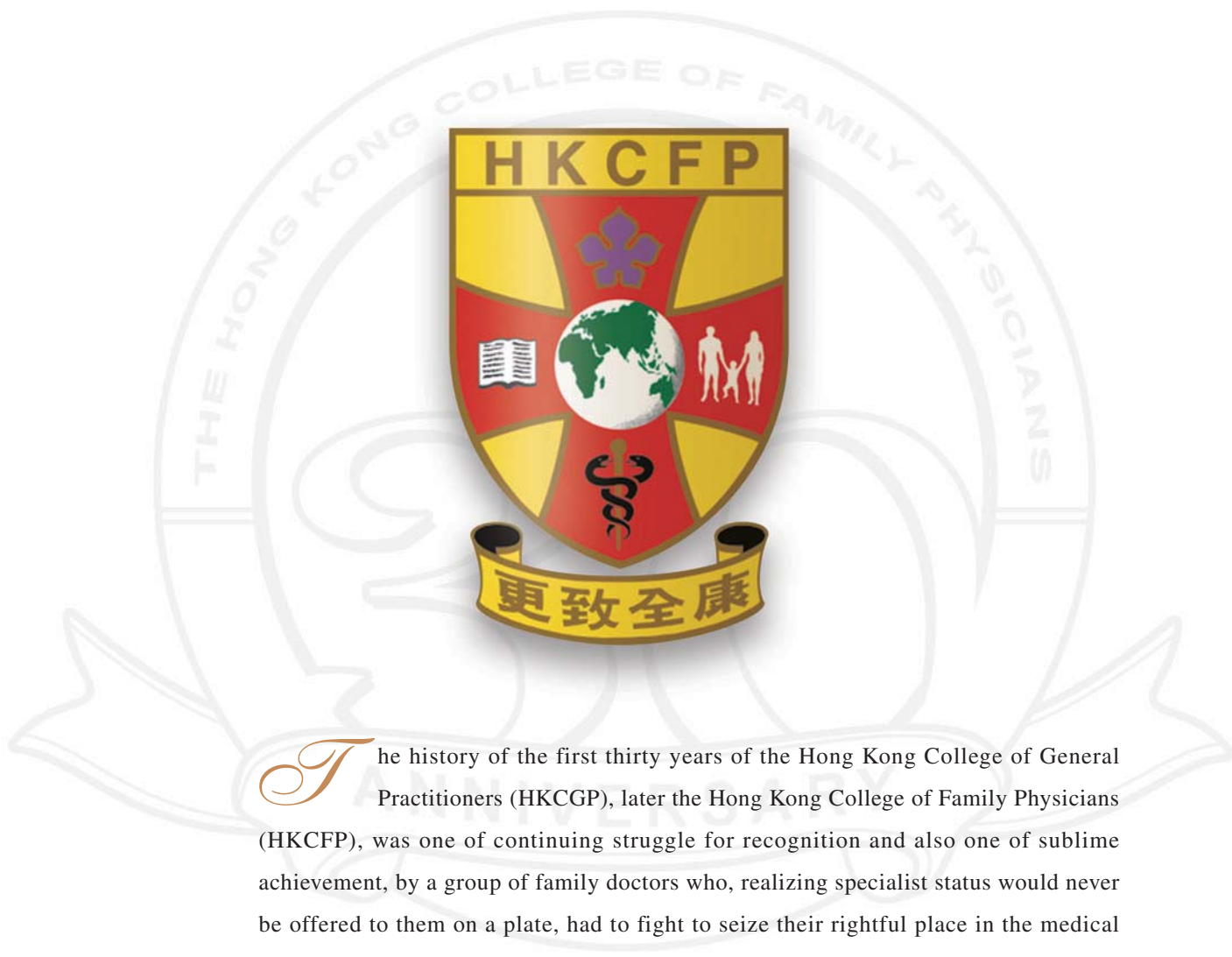
(Quoted from *The Hong Kong Practitioner* 2002; 10:498-502)

Internationally, there is no consistent definition of general practice or family medicine... a simplified definition: a general practitioner is a physician who personally provides whole-person health care to individuals and families in their living environment. The specialty should define and develop its specific core curriculum of knowledge base and skill, rather than merely sharing those from other specialties. General practitioners have specific knowledge in diseases managed mainly in the community, in comorbidities, and in family functions. General practitioners' specific skills include time as a diagnostic tool, selectivity with evidence in examination, investigation and management, and efficient communication.

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Introduction to The **Formative** Years



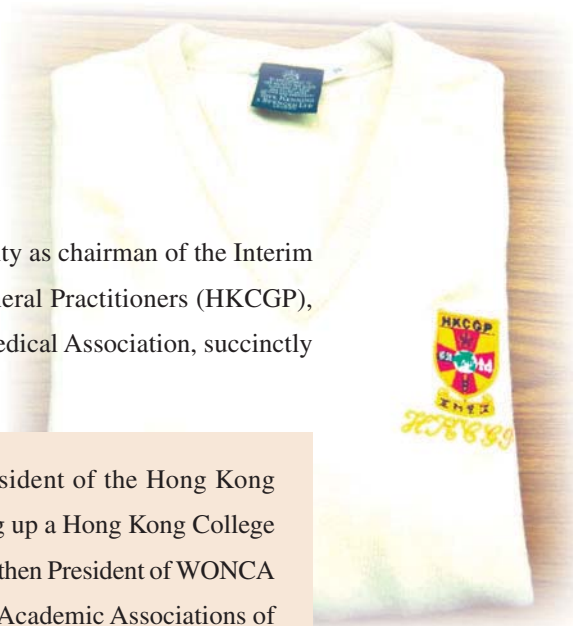
The history of the first thirty years of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners (HKCGP), later the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians (HKCFP), was one of continuing struggle for recognition and also one of sublime achievement, by a group of family doctors who, realizing specialist status would never be offered to them on a plate, had to fight to seize their rightful place in the medical scheme of things.

College Logo

The College logo was designed by Dr Ho-yin Choi in 1979. The Bauhinia flower represents Hong Kong; the book on the left side represents knowledge; the man, woman and the child on the right side represent the family unit; and the multicross of snakes is the symbol of the medical profession. He was one of the first council members and chairman of the Board of Education and chief editor of *The Hong Kong Practitioner*. Dr Choi is now the Medical Director of the Community Health Centre.

The Pre-College Era and the Birth of The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners

*I*n his 1976 'Report from the Chairman' in his capacity as chairman of the Interim Council of the nascent Hong Kong College of General Practitioners (HKCGP), Dr Henry F K Li, also the then president of the Hong Kong Medical Association, succinctly described the beginnings of the College:



'It was three years ago when Dr Peter C Y Lee, then President of the Hong Kong Medical Association, first brought up the question of setting up a Hong Kong College of General Practitioners while the late Dr M O Kent-Hughes, then President of WONCA (World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/ Family Physicians) was visiting Hong Kong. Since that time Dr Lee has been doing much groundwork for setting up of the College.

Early in 1974, the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) started to make connections with various Colleges in the world seeking for their co-operation. Exactly two years ago, the Hong Kong Medical Association set up a committee to study the feasibility of establishing such a College in Hong Kong. Dr Chiu-lung Wong headed this committee as Chairman. In July last year, Dr Wong himself made a visit to Australia to visit the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and their Family Medicine Programme which proved very successful, culminating in the delegation from The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) comprising Dr David A Game (President), Dr F M Farrar (Secretary General) and Dr R Harbinson (Chairman of Family Medicine Programme) to visit Hong Kong in December 1975. Before the arrival of the delegation, a working party was set up to establish the facilities for setting up the HKCGP of which I was the chairman. I am indebted to Dr Peter C Y Wong, Dr Peter C Y Lee, Sister Mary Aquinas, Dr Kwong-chiu Poon, Dr Kin-hung Lee, Dr Chiu-lung Wong, Dr Emmanuel Chang and Professor M J Colbourne for their kind assistance.

In November 1975, after much hard work of the committee as well as a visit of Sister Mary Aquinas and Dr Kwong-chiu Poon to Australia, the working party recommended that an interim council be formed to incorporate the HKCGP. Members of this council consisted of a cross-section of all practitioners in Hong Kong that are interested in the formation of this College. They consisted of, besides myself, Sister Mary Aquinas (Honorary Secretary), Dr Emmanuel Chang (Honorary Treasurer), Dr Peter C Y Lee, Dr Kwong-chiu Poon, Dr Gon-foon Leung, Professor M J Colbourne, Professor Cecil Lewis, Dr Hing-kwok Mak, Dr John Wedderburn, Dr Frederick C T Lee, Dr Sai-kit Tam, Dr Hin-kwong Chiu, Dr Ching-hoi Doo, and Dr Henry C L Lee.

We held the first interim council meeting with the distinguished delegation from the RACGP, that is, Dr Game, Dr Farrar and Dr Harbinson, after which there were altogether six council meetings before the Memorandum & Articles of Association were finalized and submitted to the Registrar General for incorporation.

In January 1976, Dr Emmanuel Chang and Ms Yvonne Y M Chow, Administrative Secretary of the HKMA, travelled to Australia and gathered much more information and teaching material for the College.

It must also be mentioned that without the help of the HKMA and the RACGP and their exchange of delegations, this College would never have been established.'

To a great extent, the history of the early days of the HKCGP also follows very closely the activities of a team of enthusiastic doctors, ably led by Dr Peter C Y Lee. In 1973, Dr Lee, then president of the HKMA, proposed the establishment of a Hong Kong college whose mission would be to improve the overall standards of front-line medical practice in Hong Kong.

Apart from the minutes of the Hong Kong Medical Association, written records of the pre-College era, especially personal memoirs, are few. One of the main sources of information was therefore Dr Lee himself, who played a pivotal role in the establishment of the HKCGP, and who provides valuable background to the story, as well as articles for this publication.

In 1972, Dr Lee was re-elected president of the HKMA, and served three consecutive terms, from 1972 to 1976. He explained



Left to right: Sister Mary Aquinas, Dr Peter C Y Lee and Sister Gabriel at the Presidential Dinner in 1982

to his members at the time that he would need that period of service in order to secure proper recognition for the discipline. But the fact was that the Association had no standing in international affairs because nobody outside Hong Kong knew about the HKMA. Realizing that, Dr Lee devoted most of his time to convincing people of the need for a proper organization to represent GPs in the development of family medicine in Hong Kong. As Dr Lee put it:

I was in the fortunate position to be able to spend my own money and my own time in going round the world, three times in as many years from 1973 to 1975, visiting over 40 different national medical organizations, to sell people the idea that, while Hong Kong was a British colony, the Hong Kong medical profession must be a member of the world medical community.

As a result of his efforts, Dr Lee was instrumental in securing independent status for Hong Kong in several international medical bodies, including the Commonwealth Medical Association and the World Medical Association.

Meanwhile, in early 1974, the HKMA began writing to colleges of general practitioners around the world asking under what circumstances they were able to form such a college and what was generally required to succeed in doing so. A great deal of feedback was received from many overseas colleges, and this was analyzed by Dr Chiu-lung Wong, who found that a great deal of friendly assistance was forthcoming from Australia. Following this, in 1975,



Left to right: Dr Henry F K Li and Sir Albert Rodrigues at the Conferment Ceremony in 1992

Dr Wong was the first delegate to be sent on an official study tour by the HKMA to Australia to see how the Australians handled things. When he returned he wrote a very glowing report on the success of the general practice college in Australia, and this spurred the HKMA Council to set up a working party chaired by Dr Henry F K Li to look into establishing such a college in Hong Kong.



Left to right: Dr Hin-kwong Chiu (Vice President) and Dr David Game (WONCA President) at the Wonca Asia Pacific Regional Conference in 1987

A further group went to Australia in 1975 and, in response to the HKMA's enthusiasm, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) sent the three high officials mentioned above to Hong Kong for one week, at the Australian college's own expense, to advise on how to establish a similar college.

In 1975, the HKMA formed an Interim Council under Dr Henry F K Li with the intention of spinning off a new Hong Kong College of General Practitioners (HKCGP) with an Inauguration Ceremony initially scheduled to take place in 1977. The College was not to be part of the HKMA because the HKMA itself was a more political rather than academic organization, and had to concern itself with the welfare of doctors, whereas the mission of the College was to administer their education.

The first annual general meeting of the HKCGP was held on 13 October 1977 when Dr Peter C Y Lee was elected founding president. After a hiatus, the Inauguration Ceremony of the HKCGP was held at Hong Kong City Hall on 11 March 1979, and that same year the first issue of *The Hong Kong Practitioner* was published and the College acquired its new headquarters. From then on the College never looked back.



Left to right: Dr Raymond Wu, Dr M K Rajakumar, Dr the Hon K L Thong, Dr Peter Lee (President), Professor John Leong, and Dr Henry Li at the Inauguration Ceremony in 1979

The Early Years of The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners

Incorporation

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners was subscribed by 15 members on 7 June 1977 and duly registered with limited liability, without the addition of the word 'Limited' to its name, by Hong Kong registrar general Piers Jacobs (later financial secretary) on 20 July 1977. The College would retain this name for the next 20 years.

The original 15 subscribers were:

Dr Henry F K Li	Dr Sai-kit Tam (Director)
Dr Peter C Y Lee (Director)	Dr M J Colbourne (Director)
Dr Norman G F Leung	Dr Cecil W D Lewis
Dr H K Chiu (Director)	Dr Frederick C T Lee (Director)
Dr Cathleen Monaghan	Dr Hing-kwok Mak (Director)
Dr Robert C H Doo (Director)	Dr John Wedderburn (Director)
Dr Emmanuel L P Chang (Director)	Dr Kwong-chiu Poon (Director)
Dr Henry C L Lee	

The Form X dated 25 January 1977, presented pursuant to Section 158 of the Companies Ordinance, listed the original 15 directors of the College. In addition to those listed above, the other directors were: Natalis C L Yuen, Ho-yin Choi and Tommy Y M Tam.

The first General Meeting was held on 13 October 1977 and was chaired by Dr Henry F K Li. The first item on the agenda was to observe two minutes of silence in memory of Dr Norman G F Leung, founder member and subscriber, who passed away shortly before the meeting.

Following this and other matters, the officers were elected:

President:	Dr Peter C Y Lee
Vice-President:	Dr Hin-kwong Chiu
Hon Treasurer:	Dr Emmanuel L P Chang
Hon Secretary:	Dr Natalis C L Yuen

The members of Council were then elected. The first Council consisted of:

Professor M J Colbourne	Dr Hing-kwok Mak
Dr Ho-yin Choi	Dr Kwong-chiu Poon
Dr Ching-hoi Doo	Dr Yu-min Tam
Dr John Wedderburn	Dr Sai-kit Tam
Dr Frederick C T Lee	



Before the inception of the College, an Interim Council was formed by the HKMA Council and chaired by the Dr Henry F K Li, to look into the establishment of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners. In 1977, Dr Peter C Y Lee was elected President. As recalled by Dr Natalis C L Yuen, council meetings would be held until very late at night in the HKMA council chamber in Hennessy Road, where the watchman would kindly remind members to leave before midnight, so the council members would move to the old HKMA premises on Wyndham Street until the early hours of the morning. While everybody else was nodding off to sleep, President Lee, true to form, was brimming with many new ideas, many of which came to fruition.

Inauguration

For various procedural reasons, the Inauguration of the College did not take place for a further two years, and it was not until 11 March 1979 that the Inauguration Ceremony of the College was held at the Hong Kong City Hall Theatre, officiated at by the Director of Medical and Health Services, Dr the Hon K L Thong, in the presence of a galaxy of local and overseas dignitaries. The highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of a symbolic insignia of office – a ceremonial gavel – by the President of the RACGP, Dr W D Jackson, to the newly installed President of the HKCGP, Dr Peter C Y Lee.



The inauguration ceremony of the College was held at the Hong Kong City Hall Theatre in 1979

The ceremonial aspects of the College's business should not be overlooked. Dr Lee was always of the opinion that a certain amount of ceremonial splendour was in order for the purposes of lending due gravitas to any College proceedings, and to those taking part, as a way of informing society of the dignity of the College and its relevance to the local community.

The next item on the agenda for 1979 was to secure a place where the College could maintain its headquarters, and some HK\$500,000 was paid for a 75-year lease on half the 8th Floor of the Duke of Windsor Social Service Building, Wanchai. The story of how this happened is told elsewhere in this publication by Dr Peter C Y Lee.

The year 1979 also saw the publication of the first issue of the college journal: *The Hong Kong Practitioner*. This was followed in 1980 by the development of a computerized register for recording morbidity in general practice in Hong Kong, which was instrumental in facilitating the production in 1981 of the Research Committee's first paper – 'Morbidity in General Practice' by Dr Paul Lam and Dr Stephen Foo – to be published in *The Hong Kong Practitioner*.



The first issue: *The Hong Kong Practitioner* in 1979

Medical Education

The main mission of the College was, and today still is, medical education. In the initial stages of its life, the College instituted the Refresher Course in General Practice, the first course in 1981 being conducted by Professor J H Barber, Professor and Head of Department of General Practice at the University of Glasgow. Over the following years, these courses have been conducted by a succession of distinguished academics in Family Medicine to whom the College remains grateful for their input.

In 1984, the College held the first of three 'Category III' Fellowship Examinations. These examinations were specially designed for the stalwarts of the profession who had been in general practice for ten years or more and had acquired at least 400 credit points since the inception of the College. This meant that eligible candidates had to have faithfully participated in all educational programmes laid on by the College for three years or more, together with having participated in at least three annual two-week refresher courses. Of a total of 29 eligible candidates in 1984, 15 satisfied the Examiners and the Board of Censors, and were elected Fellows of the College.

The last of the three 'Category III' examinations was conducted in 1986, and succeeded by the conjoint examination administered with the RACGP. Further information on medical education and the conjoint examinations can be found in the relevant sections below.

Spreading the Word

The formal opening ceremony of the College premises on 18 May 1985 on the 8th Floor of the Duke of Windsor Social Service Building, was officiated by Dr the Hon K L Thong, Director of Medical and Health Services. The President of the Hong Kong Medical Association, the Dean of Hong Kong University Medical Faculty, and many local and foreign dignitaries were in attendance, including Dr M K Rajakumar of the Malaysian College of General Practitioners.

Left to right: Dr M K Rajakumar, Dr the Hon K L Thong and Dr Peter Lee unveil the plaque on the 8/F Duke of Windsor Social Service Building in Hong Kong in 1985



The first Refresher Course in 1981 being conducted by Professor J H Barber



At that time the College made use of the opportunity presented by the college premises opening, as well as the availability of the college journal, to convey important messages to members of the profession as well as the general public regarding the urgency of establishing a 'Hong Kong system' of health care. This implied independent academic medical colleges governing each individual medical discipline, and a primary health-care system based on family medicine with the family physicians as its 'gatekeepers', as opposed to an unsupportable hospital-based system.



Platform Guests and Dr Natalis Yuen at the Conjoint Fellowship Conferment Ceremony in 1990

In 1988, Dr Peter Lee retired from the presidency of the College and was succeeded by Dr Natalis C L Yuen. Dr Yuen's immediate concern was his participation as a member of the 'Working Party on Postgraduate Medical Education and Training' chaired by Dr Keith Halnan. Despite sterling efforts by Dr Yuen to convince the Working Party that it should be a key part of the proposed Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (HKAM), the HKCGP did not make the list of foundation colleges. Dr Yuen maintained his efforts behind the scenes and eventually the Preparatory Committee of the HKAM under Professor David Todd reversed this decision.

Meanwhile, in 1989, the College inaugurated and launched a new series of annual lectures in honour of Dr Sun Yat-sen, the Founder of Modern China, who was also a fellow general practitioner. The privilege of delivering the first lecture of the series, appropriately named 'Dr Sun Yat-sen Oration', went to Founding President Dr Peter Lee. The oration was given at the second Conjoint HKCGP/ RACGP Fellowship Conferment Ceremony on 5 March.

In March 1992, HKCGP President Dr Natalis C L Yuen was appointed Honorary Professor of Family Medicine in the Department of Community and Family Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In the same year he was also appointed Chairman of the Health and Medical Advisory Committee of the Hong Kong Government. And not least that year, he was appointed by the Hong Kong Government as a Consultant in Primary Care.



Dr Sun Yat Sen Oration gold medallion

The highlight of 1993 was the 15th anniversary celebrations of the College held in conjunction with the 6th Conjoint HKCGP/ RACGP Fellowship Conferment Ceremony, during which an honorary FHKCGP was conferred on Professor David Todd.

On 9 December 1993, the Inauguration Ceremony of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine took place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The College took pride in recording that 76 members of the HKCGP, by then a constituent college of the Academy, were conferred with the degree of Foundation Fellow (Family Medicine) of the HKAM during the ceremony.



Left to right: Professor David Todd, Dr Stephen Foo, Dr Peter Lee, Dr Margaret Chan and Dr Donald Li at the Inauguration Ceremony of HKMA in 1993

Academic excellence is the bulwark of any scholastic discipline, and the discipline of general practice/ family medicine is no exception. For this reason despite financial constraints, the College has consistently made substantial donations to both University medical schools in Hong Kong to establish the 'HKCGP Visiting Professorships in General Practice'. The Chinese University of Hong Kong established the post of 'Professor of Family Medicine' in 1992, but Hong Kong University had only a senior lecturer in general practice in spite of repeated requests for the University to upgrade this to professorial status. In early 1995, Dr Peter Lee,



Left to right: Dr Lotte Newman (RCGP President), Dr Stephen Foo (HKCGP President), Professor Andrew Haines (plenary speaker), Dr Yen-wan Choy (Director of the 'BREAK'), Dr Cindy Lam (Scientific Chairlady) and Professor Yvonne Carter (plenary speaker) on the occasion of the 14th World WONCA Conference held in the Convention Centre of Hong Kong in 1995



The souvenir of the 14th WONCA World Conference in 1995

as Trustee of the Chan Tat Chee Memorial Fund, offered a donation of HK\$ 1.5 million to Hong Kong University to 'top up' the difference between the two relevant salaries for a period of three years. After some negotiation, the University Council, on which Dr Lee also sat, approved the 'Sun Yat Sen Chair in General Practice', which was inaugurated in the Department of Medicine in the University's Faculty of Medicine on 12 June, neatly coinciding with the 14th WONCA World Conference being held in Hong Kong at that time.


Also in 1995, the College's new six-year Vocational Training Programme in Family Medicine was approved by the HKAM, and the newly revamped 'Higher Vocational Training in Family Medicine' was formally commenced, with 15 trainees enrolling. To cope with the expansion in training activities, the total of eight hospitals providing hospital-based training was supported and augmented by 13 community-based training centres.

In 1996 the College recorded 20 trainees in the higher training programme and 32 in the basic training programme, all of whom were supported by nine hospitals. The College's Board of Education had, as usual, given members a year fully loaded with lectures, seminars, and workshops.

The following year was equally busy and dominated by 'The Handover'. A special resolution to change the name of the College from 'The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners (HKCGP)' to 'The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians (HKCFP)' was passed at an extraordinary general meeting of the College held on 19 June, with the new name becoming legally effective four days after the reversion of sovereignty to China.

On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Those involved with the birth and development of the HKCGP/ HKCFP could look on with deserved satisfaction at a job well done in establishing and preserving professional independence for family physicians in Hong Kong.

Membership of WONCA

 At the international level, the HKCFP plays a very active role in the activities of WONCA, which is the only world body of a unique medical discipline: that of family medicine.

The WONCA acronym stands for 'World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/ Family Physicians', but WONCA has now become known more simply as the World Organization of Family Doctors.

Founded in 1972, WONCA is made up of national colleges, academies or organizations concerned with the academic aspects of general family practice. Beginning with 18 members, there are now 144 member organizations in 86 countries in six WONCA regions – Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. In all, the total membership of the member organizations of WONCA is over 200,000 family physicians.

WONCA represents and acts as an advocate for its constituent members at an international level where it interacts with world bodies such as the World Health Organization. The mission of WONCA is to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world through defining and promoting WONCA values, and by fostering and maintaining high standards of care in general practice/ family medicine by:

- Promoting personal, comprehensive and continuing care for the individual in the context of the family and the community;
- Encouraging and supporting the development of academic organizations of general practitioners/ family physicians;
- Providing a forum for exchange of knowledge and information between member organizations of general practitioners/ family physicians; and
- Presenting the educational, research and service-provision activities of general practitioners/ family physicians before other world organizations and forums concerned with health and medical care.

In short, WONCA's objectives are to promote and maintain high standards of general family practice through education and research, foster communication and understanding among family physicians throughout the world, present the academic and research activities of family physicians to other world organizations or forums concerned with health or medical care, and stimulate the development of educational and research organizations of family physicians.

The WONCA World Conference is held every three years with Regional Conferences being held annually.



The 11th WONCA World Conference in London in 1986

The alliances forged by Dr Peter Lee with the WONCA leadership and membership at a very early stage were instrumental in bringing the HKCGP to a wider audience and giving the nascent organization added kudos and credibility at a time when general practitioners were somewhat looked down upon by their medical brethren. This credibility was further built on in 1983 when Dr Lee was elected WONCA Regional Vice President for the Asia-Pacific Region; in 1987 when Hong Kong hosted the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference; in 1993 when Dr Lee was installed as World President of WONCA and Dr Eddie Chan, then Hon. Treasurer of the College, was elected Vice President for the Asia-Pacific Region of WONCA, a distinct

honour for Hong Kong medical practice; and again in 1995 when the HKCGP hosted the 14th WONCA World Conference, making Hong Kong one of the most influential countries in the region in the promotion of family medicine.

During the tenure of Dr Donald K T Li, the College helped the Mainland GPs with their bid to host a WONCA Regional Conference in Beijing. This coincided with the outbreak of SARS, so attendance was unfortunately below normal levels for a conference of this kind.



WONCA Asia Pacific Regional Conference in 1987

The Establishment of the Conjoint Fellowship Examination with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the First Locally Quotable Fellowship Examination: FRACGP/ FHKCGP (FHKCFP)



The objectives of the HKCGP examination programme, which began in 1984, were the assessment of standards.

The first college continuing medical education programme was promulgated through the college journal, and was the first CME programme organized by an academic college in Hong Kong. At the time there was no Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Initially on attempting to establish a fellowship examination, the College was criticized for creating another examination when no one at the College held a postgraduate fellowship degree. As a result, as chairman of the Working Committee on Fellowship Examination, Dr Natalis C L Yuen, went to Australia on two occasions to prepare for and sit the written and clinical parts of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Fellowship Examination.

Starting the Vocational Training Programme was even more difficult for the College. Hong Kong had never considered vocational training in general practice, so there was no funding, facilities, or resources for training. The only hospital which subscribed to the idea for its resident doctors was the Evangel Hospital. Four of its residents joined the College Training Programme and the College provided part-time tutors. Subsequently the residents achieved the highest pass rates in the Fellowship Examinations.



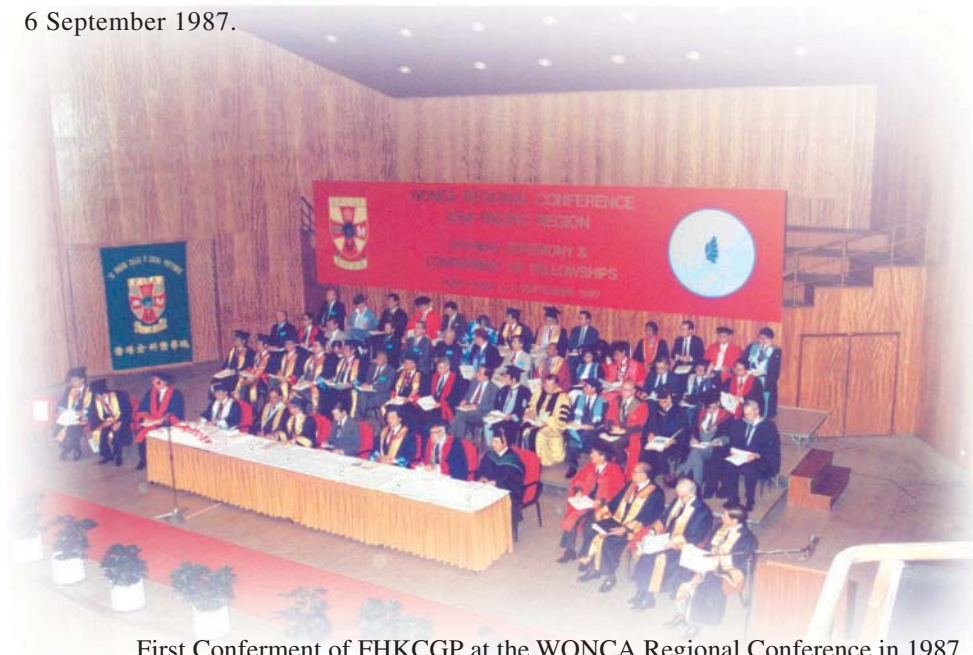
Visiting Professors discussing the Conjoint Fellowship Examination in 1986: (Back row, left to right) Dr Maxwell Tse, Dr Stephen Foo, Dr John Chung, Dr Paul Lam, Dr Natalis Yuen, Dr Eddie Chan, (Front row, left to right) Dr Lindsey Knight, Dr M K Rajakumar, Professor Neil Carson and Professor Wesley Fabb

From 1984 to 1986, the local examinations for fellowship of the HKCGP consisted of two oral examinations each lasting for half an hour. During each of the examinations held over this three-year period, the examinations were conducted by two internal and two external examiners. These examiners included the renowned Professor J H Barber from the University of Glasgow, Professor Neil Carson from Monash University, and Dr M K Rajakumar from the Malaysian College of General Practitioners.

Experienced senior Hong Kong GPs also served as local examiners, while at that time Professor David Todd of Hong Kong University was the Chief Censor. In general, candidates for the local examination were eligible if they possessed ten years of experience as a GP in Hong Kong and had accumulated 400 CME credit points since the College's inception. In 1984, a total of 29 candidates attempted the examination. Of these, 15 achieved the pass mark and were

awarded the FHKCGP, which at that time was not quotable, in other words, not recognized by the Hong Kong Medical Council, and did not become so until 1990.

From 1984 to 1986, local examinations were held with a total of 61 successful candidates. These new fellows were conferred with their titles in 1987 during the WONCA Asia-Pacific Regional Conference hosted for the first time by the College at the City Hall on 6 September 1987.



First Conferment of FHKCGP at the WONCA Regional Conference in 1987

It was the foresight of Dr Peter Lee which led to the realization that the College fellowship examination must tie up with that of an overseas college in order to maintain a recognizable international standard. Thus in 1986, Dr Stephen Foo, attending to WONCA world conference in London, made a request that the Royal College of General Practitioners hold a conjoint examination with their Hong Kong counterparts. Due to the passive response from them, he discussed the situation with the representatives of the RACGP who were also attending the conference, and asked outright whether the HKCGP could hold a conjoint examination with the Australians.



WONCA World Conference in London in 1986, promoting our 1st Regional Wonca Meeting to be held in 1987. Left to right: Dr Peter Lee, Dr Stephen Foo, Dr Cindy Lam, and Dr Eddie Chan

The more accommodating Australians replied that they would send two visiting professors to evaluate the prevailing Hong Kong standard. The RACGP sent their Director of Training and their Censor from New South Wales. As Chairman of the Board of Examiners of the HKCGP, it was up to Dr Foo to entertain them and he took them around to see the usual Hong Kong sights. Dr Foo recalls that they held one of their meetings on The Peak where, despite the congenial atmosphere, one of the visitors felt compelled to come out against the idea, but the other visitor, Professor Wesley Fabb, was in favour of conducting a trial. After the visitors had left, Professor Fabb and the RACGP Chief Censor Dr Clarke Munro gave the green light to go ahead, and Dr Munro extended invitations to Dr Maxwell Tse, Dr Paul Lam, Dr Donald Li and Dr Kitty Chan to go to Melbourne to attend the RACGP seminar for the purposes of gathering more information and to have further exchanges of views concerning the



Professor Wesley Fabb and Dr M K Rajakumar



Dr Stephen Foo and Dr Clarke Munro

proposed Conjoint HKCGP/ RACGP Fellowship Examination in 1986. The first of these examinations was eventually held in Hong Kong from 29 to 31 August 1987 with Professor Fabb and Dr Clarke Munro as the first examiners. Five students were candidates for the first Conjoint Fellowship Examination, and three candidates passed. The pass rate in subsequent years was in the 35 per cent to 70 per cent range.

The conjoint examination consisted of eight segments: three papers were written as multiple-choice questions (MCQ), clinical interpretation (CI) and modified essay question (MEQ) papers, with five clinical evaluations being management interview (MI), diagnostic interview (DI), oral, physical examination (PE) and CI. Later on, CI was combined as part of the oral examination. Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was introduced later as a requirement for fellowship. As from 2004, the new Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) format completely replaced the old format, with nearly 100 candidates passing the examination in that year, with a pass rate of around 50 per cent.



Left to right: Dr Hung-chiu Chan (Vice-President), Dr Stephen K S Foo, Dr York Y N Chow (Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food), Dr Andrew K K Ip (President), Dr Vasantha Preetham (President of the RACGP) and successful candidates at the Conjoint Fellowship Conferment Ceremony in 2007

The HKCGP has managed to achieve 'International Standards'. With the 'Australian Fellowship' being recognized by the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom, this implies that the 'quality' or 'standard' of the 'Hong Kong Fellowship' has achieved parity in standards with the rest of the world.

Exit Assessment

Since the establishment of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine in 1993, candidates have to go through two more years of higher training before attempting the Exit Assessment set by the College. Passing this examination now gives candidates an FHKAM (Family Medicine), meaning a specialist in family medicine. Professor Robin Fraser, from the University of Leicester, has been the external examiner for the Exit Assessment since its inception.

In 2007, Professor Doris Young was invited by College as our External Examiner of Exit Examination. She is the Head of Department, Chair of General Practice and Associate Dean (Equity and Staff Development), Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry, and Health Sciences in University of Melbourne. We would like to sincerely thank Professor Fraser and Professor Young to their contributions and most useful comments towards the Examination.



Welcoming Dinner for Professor and Mrs Robin Fraser in 2005



Welcoming Dinner for Professor Doris Young in 2007

Quotability

On 6 June 1990, the Fellowship of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners was officially recognized as a quotable higher medical qualification by the Hong Kong Medical Council, making the FHKCGP the first locally granted postgraduate medical degree to be so recognized.



Platform Guests at the Conjoint Fellowship Conferment Ceremony in 2007

The Inauguration of The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners as a Constituent College of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine in 1992

The Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (HKAM) was established in 1993 as a statutory body and as the ultimate authority in setting standards for all medical specialties in the SAR.

On its establishment, the Academy consisted of 12 Foundation Colleges, including the HKCGP. In later years, three more colleges were admitted. Its Council consists of 26 members, including six executives. The new Academy building provides premises for the individual colleges, examination centres, lecture halls, meeting rooms, library, guest rooms, lounge, and gymnasium. As of 2007, the Academy had a total of 4,920 fellows of whom the number of FHKAM in family medicine was 175.

The HKCGP however did not at first automatically gain entrance to the ranks of the Foundation Colleges.

In late 1986, the Working Party on Postgraduate Medical Education and Training chaired by Dr Keith E Halnan was appointed by the Hong Kong Government to determine the future of specialist practices and disciplines in Hong Kong. The College was ably represented on the committee by Dr Natalis C L Yuen, who repeatedly stressed the pivotal importance of general practice and of family physicians as 'gatekeepers' of the health-care system, pointing out that family physicians were in the front line of medicine and were not merely 'referral agencies' but could perform many of the tasks routinely performed by specialists.



Dr Keith E Halnan

But in the face of this and despite repeatedly mentioning family medicine and giving it due recognition, the finalized 'Halnan Report' rejected the application by the HKCGP to be one of the founding colleges of the Academy of Medicine proposed by the report. The reason given was that the number of 'college fellows' proposed by the college to the Working Party at the time of consultation was not considered to have attained the 'critical mass' of 50 fellows necessary for the future nurturing and training of prospective family medicine 'fellows'. This was further aggravated by the fact that the faculties of medicine at the two local universities did not have departments of general practice nor chair professorships in the discipline, but merely family medicine units under their respective departments of medicine.

In 1992, the Interim Council of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine was formed. As a member of the Interim Council as well as of the Constitution Committee, Dr Stephen Foo, then president of the HKCGP, was commissioned by the College Council to mount a campaign to get the College admitted as a founding college of the Academy. This also involved working out the criteria which would satisfy the requirements of foundation fellowship of the Academy.

In its campaign to meet these requirements, the council sought the support of past fellowship examiners from Britain, Malaysia and Australia, namely, Professor Hamish Barber, Dr M K Rajakumar, Professor Neil Carson, Dr David Game, Dr Clarke Munro, Professor Wesley Fabb and others, to whom the College remains indebted for their friendship and advice. The RACGP also lent its backing.

Unfortunately, certain forces within the Hong Kong medical profession were ranged against the College. This phenomenon can be attributed to the rapid advances in medical science and technology over the last 50 years which have resulted in the diminished value afforded to the generalist. The traditional family doctor, blending the art and science of medicine with compassion, care and understanding, has given way to highly specialized medicine with subspecialties concentrated in a hospital-based system of health-care delivery. This, coupled with the undeniable fact that most of Hong Kong's medical leadership were and are specialists, and some of them on the Halnan Committee and later on the HKAM Preparatory Committee felt that 'general practitioners' could never be considered 'specialists' because their remit was general.

However, the message gradually percolated through to the appropriate levels and, in the wake of the Halnan Report, in September 1989 the Hong Kong Government appointed Professor David Todd to head a 'Preparatory Committee' to handle the setting up of the proposed Academy. The College was eventually accepted by the committee as a foundation college of the Academy and admitted as such in May 1993 along with ten other colleges. General practice/ family medicine was thus formally recognized as a specialist discipline, and

this was achieved because the College had agreed to a fixed period of structured training for its trainees and had been able to field the required number of fellows, many of whom were 'grandfathers'. The Academy's By-law 16, the 'Grandfather Clause', had permitted doctors without the prescribed amount of structured training to be admitted to the Academy. On 19 February 1998, the HKAM Council issued a public announcement stating that its By-law 16 would be rescinded as from 1 October 1998. After the rescission of By-law 16, fellows could only be admitted if they had passed the relevant examination set by their own Academy college.



Hong Kong Academy of Medicine

The Change of Name from The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners to The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians in 1997

The Change of Name



The Hong Kong College of
General Practitioners



The Hong Kong College of
Family Physicians

In 1997, the College changed its name to the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians. As emphasized by successive presidents of the College, the reasons for this were several. The term 'family medicine' and 'family physician' are becoming more widely adopted throughout the world. In Australia, although the RACGP journal is called *Australian Family Physicians*, their college name retains the 'GP' because of its Royal Charter, despite a move to change the name some years ago. However, their training programme has been known as the 'Family Medicine Programme' for some time. Meanwhile, in the Asia region, many Colleges now use the new terms, although the old appellations are still used and understood. The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians is one of the leaders in this.

As regards the nature of the work, the term 'family medicine' highlights an extremely important aspect of the family physician's work, namely that the family circumstances are considered in greater depth whenever an individual is treated, recognizing the impact of family dynamics and interrelationships between the patient and other family members

in both the nuclear and extended families, and especially in Chinese families where the extended family is so culturally important. In short, a family physician is 'a physician who personally provides whole-person health care to individuals and families in their living environment'.

Therefore, after due deliberation and without dissent, on 19 June 1997, a special resolution to change the name of the College from 'The Hong Kong College of General Practitioners' to 'The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians' was passed. Hence, candidates passing the Conjoint Fellowship Examination would be granted the title FHKCFP.



The Family Medicine Link with China

Over the years a heavy commitment by the College to international activities has contributed to the success of the local discipline of family medicine. As mentioned earlier, this was very much the vision of Dr Peter C Y Lee and his colleagues, and this commitment now includes China on an ever-expanding basis. And it was Dr Lee who foresaw the huge importance of China in the scheme of things and actively paved the way for the College to develop close relationships with the Chinese medical authorities, starting in the early 1980s, with a view to shouldering part of the responsibility for assisting in upgrading the standards of general practice as a cornerstone of health-care delivery in China.

In an initial move, the Chinese Medical Association (CMA) invited the College to send a delegation on an official visit to Beijing in March–April 1986. The delegation consisted of Dr Peter C Y Lee, Dr Stephen K S Foo, Dr Paul Lam, Dr Maxwell Tse, and Dr Frank H H Chan. The delegation was received by the then Minister of Health, Professor Chen Minzhang, and took the opportunity to introduce the concept and principles of family medicine in China as the most cost-effective method of health-care delivery, a concept which the Chinese authorities were taking very seriously.

This was followed up in 1988 by another visit by Dr Peter C Y Lee, in his capacity as Chairman of the WONCA Council, during which a pilot scheme was discussed for training a small nucleus of teachers in general practice as the first step in bringing general practice and family medicine into the Chinese medical curriculum.

These initial visits bore fruit when, on 23 January 1989, the Beijing Society of General Practice was inaugurated, with Dr Peter C Y Lee giving the keynote address. The Society also applied for membership of WONCA and was duly accepted. This was followed in April by the historic First Tripartite Meeting of the Beijing Society of General Practice, the Chinese-Taipei Association of Family Medicine, and the HKCGP, in Hong Kong. This in turn led to a visit to China by the Chinese-Taipei Association, the first tourism group from Taiwan to be allowed into China since 1949. The Tripartite Meeting was later enlarged to include Macau in 1989.



Left to right: Dr Henry F K Li, Dr Donald K T Li, and Dr Zhi-sui Li (Vice-President of the Chinese Medical Association) in 1987

Later in the year, although not much time had elapsed since the 'June 4 Incident', the Beijing Society decided to go ahead with its 'First International Conference on General Practice', the WONCA president, Dr Donald Rae, having decided that WONCA was above politics. Attendance by doctors from all over the world was substantial and the conference was a great success.

In 1992, at the 13th WONCA World Conference in Vancouver, representatives of the Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China (PRC) approached the new President of WONCA, Dr Peter Lee, with the request that WONCA send a team of experts to China to investigate the system of medical education in China and to advise the Ministry on how to incorporate the concept of family medicine into the medical school curriculum in China. WONCA not only approved this but also voted the sum of US\$10,000 towards the project. The team subsequently presented its report to the Ministry in early 1993.

Later that year, the Chinese Society of General Practice was established, with Dr Peter C Y Lee invited to co-officiate with the Minister of Health at its inauguration on 1 November. In his dual capacity as WONCA President and Trustee of the Chan Tat Chee Memorial Fund, Dr Lee initiated and financed the Chan Tat Chee Primary Care Centre at the Capital University of Medical Sciences, which has since become one of the main centres for the teaching of family medicine in China.

In October 1998, the Chinese Society of General Practice invited Dr Peter C Y Lee and Dr Stephen K S Foo to Beijing to discuss the feasibility of bidding for the WONCA Regional Conference. The bid was a success and the next Regional Conference was scheduled to take place in Beijing from 3–9 December 2003. In July 2002 there was a further meeting between the two sides in Kunming at a '4-Party Meeting' hosted by the Chinese Medical Association (CMA), which concentrated on the arrangements for this conference. Unfortunately the Regional conference itself was compelled to take place in the aftermath of the SARS epidemic, so attendance was disappointing and those involved in organizing this WONCA conference were somewhat discouraged from organizing and attending international meetings. However, HKCFP was able to successfully bid to host the next WONCA Regional Conference in 2009.

With the new century, the new HKCFP President, Dr Donald K T Li, continued with CMA study tours to Hong Kong and also established links with another group of GPs in China known as Teachers of Medicine of China, an academic association with a general practice

sub-group. The College started organizing courses for them in China, including a 'train-the-trainers' course, which course is currently ongoing in Shenzhen. The group has strong support from the Ministry of Health (MoH), so they have been able to make significant progress. Meanwhile the College has organized groups of teachers from Hong Kong to go to the Mainland to help them hold courses every year.

Under the presidency of Dr John T N Chung, further efforts were made to assist China in her development of the discipline of family medicine, with the College continuing to position itself as the major body in family medicine in Hong Kong. This course was seen as appropriate since the HKAM had signed a memorandum of understanding with the MoH to help it establish an organization similar to the HKAM to regulate all the medical specialties in China.

With Dr Andrew K K Ip taking over the reins in December 2006, the College continues to exert its influence to make family medicine a specialty in China and foresees many opportunities for collaboration between the College and the Ministry and the major authorities and organizations in China, with many opportunities for education and training. It is possible that the Ministry will establish training centres over the next ten years and the College is now exploring the possibility of accrediting training centres in China. This is a very long-term project, but means that some of the trainees may have the option to do part of their training in China, which will be of considerable benefit.



WONCA president-elect and WHO officials during the launch of Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD) in Beijing in March 2006