

WONCA World Secretariat Now in Singapore



(From L - R) Mr Chan Soo Sen, Dr Michael Boland, A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean and Dr Alfred Loh.

The Senior Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Health Mr Chan Soo Sen officially opened the World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA) World Secretariat hosted by the College of Family Physicians Singapore on 5 November 2001.

THE NEW WORLD SECRETARIAT

In his address to the gathering that included the Wonca Executive Committee Members from 10 different countries, Mr Chan said that Singapore is honoured to be the new venue for its secretariat. He further added that the College has also been chosen to host the 2007 Wonca World Conference, the second time that Singapore will be hosting a world conference on Family Medicine (FM). He congratulated the College on its success and looked forward to Singapore playing host to the world fraternity of family physicians.

Wonca is made up of national colleges, academies or organisations concerned with the academic aspects of general family practice. Beginning with 18 members in 1972, there are now 65 member organisations in 56 countries representing some 150,000 general practitioners/family physicians worldwide.

WORLD HUB IN FAMILY MEDICINE

In his welcome address, A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, President of the College drew

attention to the intertwined history of the College founded in 1971 and that of Wonca founded a year later. The Australia College and other members of Wonca had contributed greatly to the development of both postgraduate and undergraduate FM in Singapore. He hoped that the College's successes in establishing Singapore as the world hub in Family Medicine would soon lead to the formation of an independent FM Department in a university in Singapore. Independent FM departments have been set up in many universities in developed and developing countries. Australia has twelve such departments and Malaysia one.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The President of Wonca, Dr Michael Boland, in his address thanked the College for its contributions to Wonca. He went on to announce two special global issues that Wonca will address in the next three years. The first is Tobacco Prevention and Cessation. The second is on HIV/AIDS. He went to say that family doctors cannot remain silent on these issues. He quoted Martin Luther King: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands at times of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy". These two issues are global challenges and family physicians must decide

where they stand in relation to it. "We should do that consistent with the values and the standards we share as family doctors. Singapore has won the admiration of the world for its efficiency and business success. It will become the platform from which Wonca will launch an ambitious agenda over the next three years."

THE FAMILY PHYSICIAN COMMUNITY ON THE WORLD STAGE

Dr Alfred Loh, past President of the College and now the Chief Executive of Wonca, when interviewed by SMA-News said that he was honoured and proud to be representing Singapore's medical fraternity, and in particular, the family physician community on the world stage. A/Prof Goh Lee Gan recently appointed the Regional Vice-President of the Asia-Pacific region also did Singapore proud.

The World Organisation of Family Doctors launched its new website Global Family Doctor at the ceremony. It will provide information and education for family doctors and the public worldwide. The launch is just the beginning. Global Family Doctor, which is accessed via www.GlobalFamilyDoctor.com will expand continually and be updated daily to provide the world's most complete website for medical information. ■