

**The Hong Kong College of
Family Physicians**

7th Floor, HKAM Jockey Club Building,
99 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Hong Kong.

Tel : 2528 6618 (4 Lines)

Fax : 2866 0616

Website:

<http://medicine.org.hk/hkcfp/journal.htm>

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EDITORIAL

Family Physician Writers

In this issue of *The Hong Kong Practitioner*, four articles have been contributed by non-academic practising family physicians. I hope this is the first sign that family physicians will begin contributing significantly to *HK Pract*, which aims to promote the development of quality family medicine in Hong Kong and the region. *HK Pract* has received good support from our specialist writers over the past years but contributions by family physicians have been admittedly less than satisfactory. It has long been the objective of this editorial team to encourage family physicians to write and to contribute to *HK Pract* because family physicians have both expertise and a wealth of experience to share with their colleagues.^{1,2}

The first article is a new column, "Murmur", starting in this issue of *HK Pract*.³ The aim of this addition is to provide a forum for something perhaps less formal but by no means less important. Family physicians are welcome to submit to us anything which they would like to share with their colleagues. It can be something related to medicine but it can also be something non-medical. It is hoped that this addition will encourage family physicians to pick up their pens or switch on their word processors to begin their path of medical writing. Please feel free to contact the Editorial Board if you want to talk to someone about what you are writing. We will be more than happy to work with you to ensure a quality article is produced for publication.

The second family physician paper is by Dr Raymond Pau who carried out a survey to study the attitudes of Higher Trainees of the vocational training programme towards the mentorship scheme.⁴ This is a good example of carrying out a relatively simple but important survey because there is little data currently available to allow us to examine the mentorship scheme for Higher Trainees in Hong Kong.

The third family physician paper is by Dr Victor S P Chan who once worked in Hong Kong but is now practising in Australia.⁴ He has developed a special interest in palliative care in his current practice, however he wrote his paper based on both his Hong Kong and Australian clinical experience. This cross-cultural primary care experience has allowed Dr Chan to examine palliative care from a unique position and he has shared this experience with us.

The fourth family physician paper is by Drs Antonio Chuh and T S Au.⁵ Dr Chuh is a private family physician while Dr Au is a specialist. Not only is this a paper where medical knowledge is being shared among family physicians and specialists but it is also an example of how family physicians can work with their specialist colleagues outside the usual clinical setting.

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Their combined effort has produced a paper reflecting the consensus viewpoints of both primary care doctor and specialist in looking after patients with sexually transmitted diseases.

These four papers represent the contribution to medicine of four practising family physicians at a scale much wider than their usual one-to-one clinical contacts because the impact of their papers reaches out to thousands of doctors and their patients. Let us be honest about one thing, medical writing is no easy task. No one is born with the skills of writing. It takes a lot of time and trouble but it can be fun.⁶ It is also very meaningful. Training, such as the workshop run by Dr Richard Smith, Editor of *British Medical Journal* for our members at the end of last month will help. But, like most practical skills, nothing will replace practice. Other tools are also very important. I find a word processor and a dictionary almost indispensable. Having an experienced mentor in medical writing, if available, is also a big advantage. Our editorial team is more than happy to provide the assistance necessary to help with your writing endeavour.

I hope this issue of *HK Pract* represents the beginning of greater involvement of family physicians in contributing articles to this journal, which is primarily for family physicians. ■

Lam Tai Pong
Editor

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