

## SPECIAL THEME: INAUGURAL ISSUE OF THE *MALAYSIAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN*

### OUR JOURNAL

MK Rajakumar, Past President and Past Chairman of Council, Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia

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Why do we have a journal, the *Malaysian Family Physician*? We are a small academic organisation in a small, developing country. Our resources are thin, and there already exist, though not 40 years ago, a variety of journals in general practice/primary care.

This is one of the debates we had in the early years of our existence. Other topics in dispute were whether you could *train* for General Practice, whether general practice was *teachable* in a formal programme, and whether you could actually *examine* candidates in fitness for General Practice. Other Colleges too debated these issues, and reasonable and sensible arguments were put forward why it was laughable to speak of a separate *academic discipline* that could be taught and examined. All this is taken for granted these days. If you are convinced that General Practice was a separate discipline of Medicine, as distinct as the others, then it must be underpinned by an academic organisation with its own field of scientific research and an academic journal. The reason for the existence of Colleges and Academies such as ours is to improve the care of patients and their families, and to improve care in the community in order to enhance the level of health. Our struggle to exist and function is a story to be kept for another day.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of academic organisations of General Practice. The first was the American Academy of Family Physicians had distinguished themselves from the existing general practice

organisations that were not supportive of the idea of training for board certification - a trend taken by all the other medical specialties in the USA. We were probably the fifth in the world to be formed, and the numbers now approach 200 of vastly different sizes and strength. There is a strong and influential World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA) with 169 members, all with their own journals.

Our Academy was founded in 1973, the first examination was held soon after, and the *Journal* started publication also in 1973. The weakness of the *Academy Journal* is a mark of the weakness of our Academy. We have not had an easy passage, but I shall not go into the sad story of the obstacles to initiatives in this country.

Our *Journal* is not a magazine although there may be elements, nor only a professional publication. It should be most importantly a peer reviewed journal for the publication of research that provide the basis of the choices and decisions we have to make on health care, and the forum for the analysis and evaluation, and debate on the application of scientific evidence for better care. The *Journal* educates us, and guides us in our practice and in our professional lives. This is a vital task that requires some very good people.

We now have a very promising team taking on the task of managing and editing the *Journal*, and I feel grateful that they are taking on this important responsibility. They deserve the support of Council, of academic General Practice, and of all general practitioners.

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