

NURTURING TOMORROW'S DOCTORS TODAY

Senior Vice Dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCSOM), Prof Martyn Partridge, shares his insights into the development of Singapore's newest medical school which opens in 2013.

#1 HOW HAS THE TEACHING OF MEDICINE CHANGED IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

I think teaching today is like life — changing rapidly. We have to imbue in our medical students the importance of lifelong learning so they can adapt. They can only do this if they understand the scientific basis of medicine, because no one knows what will be thrown at us in five or 10 years' time.

Teaching has also changed dramatically. In the old days, medicine was lecture-based and about clinical seminars. But very often, learning was also about apprenticeships — following great men on their ward rounds.

Today, we use new technologies such as e-learning, problem-based learning, and team learning while also relying on traditional clinical seminars and apprenticeships. This concept of blended learning permits us to select the best method for the outcomes we wish to achieve.

#2 YOU'VE CONSISTENTLY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTORS PUTTING THEIR PATIENTS FIRST. HOW CAN SUCH A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT TRANSLATE INTO PRACTICE AT THE NEW SCHOOL?

I personally believe that service has dropped out of medicine to some extent, and we need to put it back. To a large extent this involves the selection of medical students with the right qualities, and then providing students with the training and evidence in favour of a patient-centred system. The evidence is overwhelming that good doctor-patient communication and shared decision making enhances satisfaction and compliance and dramatically reduces health care costs. Singapore cannot afford not to adopt this approach.

As patients' expectations change, doctors must deliver

the type of care that is necessary for those who receive it. I would like people to say that the doctors we have produced are the type that we would wish to be cared for by ourselves.

#3 GIVEN THE SCHOOL'S LINKS WITH IMPERIAL COLLEGE, WE IMAGINE THAT THE LKCSOM WILL SEE A HIGH-LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT SOME OF THESE COLLABORATIONS MIGHT BE?

We will undertake some structured electives for final year IC students. Starting from 2013, there will be 30 of them coming to Singapore for a seven week period to learn more about global health and international health. They will be undertaking seminars both at Nanyang Technological University and Tan Tock Seng Hospital. June also sees the first LKCSOM lecture whereby visiting Imperial staff undertake Large Group Interactive Seminars at TTSH, NTU, KKH and elsewhere to share expertise; that's an example of the collaborations we wish to see.

#4 WHAT WOULD BE A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LKCSOM FIRST YEAR AND THIRD YEAR STUDENT?

In the first year, students will spend two days a week at NTU attending seminars, practical sessions, and classes with team-based learning, and problem-solving. The other three days will be spent on a clinical campus either at Novena or in a polyclinic or a step-down hospital, attending clinical seminars and visiting the wards to interview patients and acquire skills in listening to and examining patients.

There will also be special LKCSOM suites of consultation



Prof Martyn Partridge

rooms and seminar rooms in up to three polyclinics, where teachers will train students in basic clinical skills. The students will cut their teeth in history-taking and patient examination with simulated patients in communication laboratories, then with paid teachers in a polyclinic, before attending to ill patients in hospitals. We have to help our students realise that health care is delivered in many settings, not just within hospitals.

Increasingly in years three, four and five, students will be working round the clock in the same way that junior doctors do. We're talking 24/7 work. Some of the most taxing aspects of clinical care and some of the richest learning opportunities involve acute decision-making that will occur in the emergency departments in the middle of the night.

#5 WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, WILL SET THE LKCSOM STUDENT APART FROM HIS OR HER PEERS?

We've put a lot of thought into how medicine is developing. To produce graduates ready for the challenges and methods of working in 2018 and beyond, our students will have very early exposure to bio-engineering, business school methodologies, and computer sciences. Students will get to learn from the expertise of those at NTU, which we will couple with the clinical strengths of TTSH.

Medical students should understand that regardless of whatever field they practice, they will spend the majority of

their time dealing with elderly patients coping with long-term conditions, rather than necessarily making star diagnoses and saving lives of critically-ill patients.

If they don't understand the value of integrated care and the importance of good care for those with long-term illnesses or the elderly, they will be burnt out by the age of 30 and we will have a generation of doctors who are not professionally satisfied.

#6 WHAT ARE SOME MEANINGFUL WAYS THAT NHG CAN SHARE IN LKCSOM'S EXCITING JOURNEY?

NHG staff are shaping the development of this new school in terms of clinical curriculum and in providing clinical teaching staff. I am sure that they will also welcome the scientists necessary to build a successful Medical School. There will be increasing interaction with local experts and, indeed, everyone from assistant deans to module leaders are from NHG. I think local NHG staff will enjoy the pleasure of being part of an active medical school at which new research opportunities will arise, new academic clinical scientists will be appointed, and new facilities will become available. +



107 Mandalay Road will be the headquarters of the new Novena Campus

NEW MEDICAL CAMPUS @ NOVENA

"In the heart of Novena Campus is this wonderful and iconic heritage building along Mandalay Road which will be our headquarters. The newly-built education block at its rear will be used subsequently for conferences and Master's courses and post-graduate teaching even when our adjacent 14-storey clinical science building is built. The intention is for the building to be ready in 2013, a few months before classes start in August. The NTU Novena campus will be immediately adjacent to amazing healthcare facilities, a new national Communicable Diseases Centre, Tan Tock Seng Hospital and the National Skin Centre building. Novena will be a wonderful campus, a little medical hub in itself."