

By A/Prof Chan Yew Weng



A/Prof Chan Yew Weng

Citation of Prof Woo Keng Thye

This evening we are gathered here, not to talk about me, or to listen to one of my lectures, but to honour an eminent and distinguished person, who has made significant contributions to Medicine and the community. And we are going to award him with the Singapore Medical Association Lecturership 2007.

To date, we have 38 SMA Lecturers with 40 Lectures delivered since the SMA Lecture was instituted in 1963. Tonight, our honoured lecturer will join the ranks of Dr Gwee Ah Leng, Dr Yahya Cohen, Prof Seah Cheng Siang, Prof Wong Hock Boon, just to name a few of the distinguished mentors of our medical profession who were honoured with this lecturership.

In the history of mankind, there are men... and there are men. Got it? No? Let me repeat myself. In the history of mankind, there are men... and there are men.

For those who are still lost, let me read to you a quote from a 20th Century American comedian and actor, Julius Henry Goucho Marx:

“Only one man in a thousand is a leader of men, the other 999 follow women.”

Prof Woo Keng Thye is indeed a leader of men. This is evidence-based. I have scanned through his curriculum vitae many times to make this conclusion.

Prof Woo Keng Thye was born on 15 July 1944 in Ipoh. He is a Roman Catholic and is

happily married with two children. He had a lovely childhood and completed his primary and secondary education at the St Michael's Institution in Ipoh. He was a Scout Master, a School Team Fencer, a Science Magazine Editor, a Psychology Club Chairman, a School Debater and one who loves bonsai and writing.

Immediately one recognises that this is the making of a young leader of men, with good genes, who is very talented and also good at multitasking.

The young Woo did well in school and was admitted to the University of Singapore to study medicine, graduating with MBBS in 1969. After graduation, he returned to Malaysia to serve as a house physician in Ipoh General Hospital for one year. He completed his MO rotations in Kluang Hospital and Johor Bahru Hospital from 1970 to 1973. Dr Woo then signed up for the M.Med (Internal Medicine Examination) of the University of Singapore in 1973 and was the top candidate for that year. Following that, he went back to Kluang to be a general practitioner from 1973 to 1975.

After two years of being a general practitioner in the quiet town of Kluang, the young Dr Woo wanted some excitement. Thus he joined the Department of Renal Medicine in the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) as a Registrar in October 1975. Since joining SGH, Dr Woo has remained in the same Department, rising through the ranks,

A/Prof Chan Yew Weng is a Clinical Anaesthesiologist who is practising full-time in Singapore General Hospital. He has interests in medical education, people management, conference management, biotechnology R&D and technology assessment. He is also a person who has a soft spot for good food, fine wine and like-minded friendship.

from Registrar to Head of Department, and then Chairman of the Division of Medicine, a post he held from April 2000 to May 2003.

Currently, Prof Woo Keng Thye is the Emeritus Consultant and Advisor to the Department of Renal Medicine, SGH, and Clinical Professor in the Department of Medicine, National University of Singapore.

Prof Woo received 17 honours and awards in his career, including the SGH Best Research Award 1996; the SGH Excellence Publication Award 2000; the SGH Best Teacher Award 2001; and the Public Administration Medal (Silver) at the 2002 National Day Award. He was recognised for his excellence in Teaching, Research and Service as a physician leader. He also received the FRACP (Nephrology) from the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in 1979.

Prof Woo was a two-term President of the Singapore Society of Nephrology from 1978 to 1990, and from 1994 to 1996.

Under the category of “Position in Committees, Societies and Associations”, his curriculum vitae has 58 items, including Chairman of the National Medical Research Council from 2003 to 2006; President of the 3rd World Congress in Nephrology in 2005, and Board Director of the National Kidney Foundation since 2005.

Prof Woo has 47 publications in conference proceedings, 48 publications in local journals and 65 publications in regional and international journals.

He has written six medical books including the *Handbook of Clinical Nephrology* in 1991 and the *Textbook of Clinical Nephrology*, Second Edition in 2002.

Prof Woo’s love for writing extends to 10 literary publications in the collection of poems, short stories and novels. And if I am not mistaken, we owe the lyrics of the SGH song (Oh... SGH Oh SGH) to Prof Woo Keng Thye.

This is a true life story, and I believe there will be more additions to it, of a talented leader of men, who is amongst us this evening.

My unforgettable encounter with Prof Woo was when he was the Chairman of the SGH Musical “Everyday’s a Miracle”, a four nights musical performed at the Jubilee Hall of the Raffles Hotel, to raise funds for charity, in celebration of the 175th Anniversary of SGH in 1996.

Prof Woo’s ability to persuade, coerce and inspire a young busy HOD of the Department of Anaesthesia and Surgical Intensive Care then to attend rehearsals, to dress up, to act, dance and sing on stage was indeed an act of true leadership. But that is a story for another happy occasion.

Let us now put our hands warmly together to welcome the Singapore Medical Association Lecturer 2007 on stage to deliver his lecture on his pet subject other than Nephrology – Physician Leadership.

I give to you the one and only Prof Woo Keng Thye. ■