

## EDITORIAL

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# A Changing Time

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“If you do not change, you can become extinct”

Spencer Johnson<sup>(1)</sup>

First let me thank you for the privilege of serving you as the new President of our college. With the privilege comes duties and responsibility. The duties as prescribed by our charter. The responsibility is to guide our college, as best as we could, through a changing time.

A changing time where our nation and society is undergoing a huge sea change, economically, culturally, and politically. Constitutionally, the new constitution of 1997 resulting from the public distrust and resentment of past government, dictates a lot of social and political changes. In the new constitution, public participation is guaranteed. There are new mechanisms for public scrutiny in the forms of new independent organizations to oversee the government business. The right of the people to equal access to education as well as quality health care is emphasized. Health is a right rather than privilege as in previous time. The civil service now is to be more transparent and accountable. Information is to be more accessible.

A time also when litigation is increasing in frequency. The intrapartum period is said to be the most litigious period. From my past experience on the disciplinary committee of the General Medical Council, litigation arises often from first, the doctor not being there; second, not attending to patient's problem; third, not listening or not hearing the need of the patient; fourth, not writing it down; fifth, not being kind; and sixth, not being informative.

In recent time access to medical information is no longer controlled by medical profession. With the fast growing and easy access to the internet and other electronic and printed media, as at present, the public can readily access to medical information and knowledge with ease. Knowledge is power.

First let me write about our duties prescribed by our charter. These are

1. To establish practice standard and maintain good professional conduct.
2. To establish, facilitate and stimulate continue medical education and Research pertaining to the science and art of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
3. To foster professional unity in our specialty
4. To provide relevant and timely information pertaining to women's health to the public to protect against and deter preventable illness.
5. To advice the government in matters relating to woman's health
6. To represent our specialty at national and international level

In summary our duties consist of keeping our specialty abreast with Continued Professional Education and Development and foster professional unity. Provide the public and the government with timely, accurate and complete information on woman's health so that preventable ailments can be deterred as well as appropriate actions can be taken by the government. Represent our specialty at national and international level. On top of these duties we must advocate. Advocacy for women's rights and equality; against violence in the family. Without advocating for women's right and equality, this social disease, violence against women and her family, cannot be effectively alleviated. This disagreeable phenomenon has been with every society for decades. Publicizing it will sensitize the public to this social problem. Awareness is the first step towards cure.

To perform our duties well will require effective and current Health Information System (HIS) and Management Information System (MIS). The former (HIS) is absolutely essential so that we can provide material for public information and education as well as to influence government regarding present and foreseeable health problems in Thai women. The latter (MIS) is also essential so that we can manage the affairs that have been assigned to our College both domestically and internationally.

To perform our duties well we have to reorganize our internal institutional management. I have therefore established new subcommittees to deal with the expected work load.

For matter relating to substandard care and professional conducts a subcommittee on Standard and Ethics is formed. This important new subcommittee is chaired by Dr. Saibua pB. Chicharoen from Songkla, whose members came from a broad spectrum of our specialty, from private as well as from academic department and from various regions of Thailand.

To manage matters relating to research support a subcommittee on research is led by Dr. Pisake Lumbiganon who has a vast international experience in research synthesis with W.H.O as well as the Cochrane Study. He and his subcommittee, I am sure will greatly improve institutionally, our research capability and technical support.

To foster professional unity, a new subcommittee, the Membership subcommittee, is formed. This is supervised by our second deputy secretary general Dr. Tipsuree Narkprasit. This subcommittee must have management information of all our members. Information like your name, age, sex, current address, home address, medical institution where you graduated and post graduate training, your special interest, your preferences, etc. So we can serve your needs, both educational and professional development, efficiently and effectively.

To supervise the dissemination of relevant and timely information to the public and the government, the new Public Relation Subcommittee is established, with our vice president Dr. Orawan Kiriwat in charge. Our secretariat office is managed by the Secretary General Dr. Suwachai Intaraprasert, who is no stranger to most of you. He was previously in charge of professional education. The secretariat office is given a mission to reorganize our large office space more efficiently to house our institution past history, "a place for the gathering of our past" I feel strongly about the importance of our institutional culture; who were our professional forbearance?; the previous leaders of their time?. What contribution they made to the science and art of Obstetrics and Gynecology in Thailand. This process of gathering together the history of our pasts will take time, since the secretariat office previously moved with the office of the president, valuable historical evidence were unknowingly disposed of; some were lost in transit. The new continue medical education sub-committee (CME) is chaired capably by Dr. Wiboonpan Thitadilok who has been with the college heading several sub-committee previously. This sub-committee will deal with aspects of continue professional development, liaising with the General Medical Council's Centre for CME.

The important subcommittee on Education and Professional assessment is now supervised by Dr. Sompop Limpongsanurak. This subcommittee deals with training of our residents; crafting new curricula to be abreast with

new development. Currently the "Objective Structured Long Examination Record" (OSLER) is being used to assess our neophyte specialist. With demographic changes and administrative re-zoning, coupled with fast moving advances in our science, and ever changing scene in Universal Health Care coverage, the importance of manpower development cannot be over emphasized. This manpower development subcommittee is given mission to study and recommend to the College and General Medical Council the quantity and quality of our manpower, including its distribution in the next decade. Dr. Verapol Chandeying leads this important subcommittee on our future. To predict our future he must know our present. Dr. Verapol is a veteran. He has served our college many terms and has been in charge of the very same committee for as many years. We expect great things from him. The Foreign Relationship subcommittee is being supervised by myself. We have agreed in principle to re-establish our long neglected relationship with our sister Royal College to the South, the Australian - New Zealand Royal College. It has been mutually agreed to hold a joint Thai - AUS/ NZ scientific congress in 2004. Further details are presently being worked on.

The other important technical subcommittees are the Gynecologic Oncology, the Reproductive Health, the Maternal and Fetal Medicine sub-committees. The Gynecologic Oncology subcommittee is chaired by Dr. Somkeart Srisupundit who has singlemindedly volunteered to serve the college in this subcommittee for several terms over as many years. There are major challenges facing this technical subcommittee. One of which is cancer of cervix. This disease is known to be a major threat to the health of Thai women. It is number one cause of death in Thai women. Yet we do not know enough about it. We have as yet to establish systematic collection of its epidemiology for the whole country; region by region; province by province, district by district; the best approach to prevention under our existing national context; the total number of women to be screened; the appropriate frequency of screening; the optimal technique for screening; etc. These technical and management questions remained to be answered. And quickly too. We have many excellent and capable Gynecologic Oncologist gathered in the form of "the association of Thai Gynecologic Oncologists" or "TGO" to assist our college. To conquer this preventable disease we must have information systematically collected and catalogued. This subcommittee under the capable hands of its Chair, and able to draw technical support from the Association of Gynecologic Oncologists whose membership, Dr. Somkeart informs me, numbered more than a hundred. We look forward, with confidence, to a fast progress from this subcommittee. Incidentally on this very topic, our past President had a perspicacity in making a joint research project involving our college, The John Hopkins University, The Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health and Khonkean University; the "VIA project" (Visual Inspection of cervix stained by Acetic acid). The study location is in the province of Roi-Et in the Northeast region of Thailand. Although the first phase of the project is verbally reported, by the past President, to the College Executive Board, to be successfully completed since last year.<sup>(2)</sup> There has been no official report with scientific data at any of our scientific congress. Several verbal reports of the success were made at the AFOG executive meeting in Australia by our past President, at the hearing of the parliamentary subcommittee for health in Bangkok,<sup>(3)</sup> an informal report by our subcommittee chair on Gynecologic Oncology, Dr. Somkeart to a meeting "HPV- 2000" in Barcelona, Spain.<sup>(4)</sup>

We at the college and our colleagues in Thailand had, as yet, no opportunity to see hard data and to assess and discuss its reportedly successful outcome and possible scientific, social, and health management impacts for Thailand.

We look forward very much to the opportunity to hear and discuss this fruitful scientific exchange with the study team, so that we, in Thailand, can make use and maximise the benefit resulting from this historic joint research program; of course within the context of our health care system and existing medical economic environment. When all is done, congratulations would be in order to our past President and her research team, as well as our rural women research subjects, for this first historic step to prevent invasive cervical carcinoma in

Thai women. As for the health of mother and her child, this subcommittee is in the capable hands of Dr. Somsak Suthutvoravud. He has been working out of the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Ramathibodi, to improve the perinatal health in rural Thailand in conjunction with the Ministry of Health for the past decade. He has also held the post of the Secretary General of the Thai Perinatal Society before coming in to the college executive team. He volunteered to chair this important subcommittee. To start, much information as to the trend in practice of obstetrics in various part of Thailand including the maternal and perinatal outcome must be collected systematically and catalogued in to our Health Information System. Challenges regarding accurate information on the practice of induced abortion in our women still exist. This information must be brought in to our HIS. This is important since public and government must be informed and appropriate response made, since many women still lose their lives tragically, unnecessarily and preventably from this event. It is our role to prevent untimely death and maternal morbidity. The third technical subcommittee concerns reproductive health. This is chaired by Dr. Somboon Kunathikon, who has previously chaired our scientific subcommittee. This subcommittee cover a large spectrum of issues in reproductive health from Teen age to “Golden age”. All these three technical subcommittees are also charged with the management of subspecialty training and education in Gynecologic Oncology, Maternal Fetal Medicine and Reproductive Health. Our scientific subcommittee is led by Dr. Sureeporn Boonjong. She has been serving our college for the past several terms in different subcommittee. Her subcommittee is charged with crafting all the scientific meetings such as the Refresher’s course, the annual college congress so that it fulfils our call for continue medical education and professionally develop our members as well as creating unity amongst our specialty. Last but not least in importance is the Finance subcommittee headed by our Honorary Treasurer. He came in his first term as an executive member. He is not new to the college. He has been serving in the various subcommittee in the past. The call to raise funding to support our financially consuming activities is a hard one. But I am sure Dr. Jongjate Aojanepong will be successful in crafting ways and means to attain this important goal.

It remains for me to thank the publication subcommittee ably chaired by Dr. Anek Aribarg for his admirable devotion to this difficult job of publishing our Journal and news bulletin. Successful publication needs support from every one of us in providing scientifically sound material for a peer review process. Contributing our valuable time in helping to review articles as well as to write editorial articles which I am doing now. I will do so, as frequently as I possibly can, while I am serving as your President. Publishing also costs money. Sponsors have to be found. Dr. Anek, our editor, is doing an admirable job, that’s why I have asked him to continue in such a difficult and thankless task. His selflessness is much appreciated by all of us.

With these changes, we are hopeful that our college will adapt successfully in to this changing time.

## References

1. Johnson S: Who moved my cheese? : An amazing way to deal with change in your work and your life. Penguin Putnam Inc. Publisher, London, 1998 p. 46
2. Minutes of the executive meeting RTCOG: 11<sup>th</sup> / 2544, Nov.16, 2001, p.17
3. Ibid. : 7/2543 on July 21, 2000, p.4
4. Ibid. : 8/2543 on August 18, 2000, p.7