

# family doctor-an inseparable triad

Family Medicine, Family Practice and  
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As World Family Doctors' Day falls on May 19, may I highlight some salient points on Family Medicine, Family Practice and Family Doctor. I would like to present some quotations:

Family medicine may be defined as a discipline concerned with the personal, primary, comprehensive and continuing health care of the individual in relation to his family, community and environment. (*College of Family Physicians, Singapore. 2002*)

Family Medicine is neither an amalgam of several disciplines or an unique discipline in itself. It is a discipline that transcends specialties as it integrates into a new whole. (*Dr. Wayne Watson/College of Family Physicians, Canada*)

The general practitioner deals with patients presenting with undifferentiated problems and provides continuing, comprehensive, whole-person care to individuals, families and their community. (*Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, 1991*)

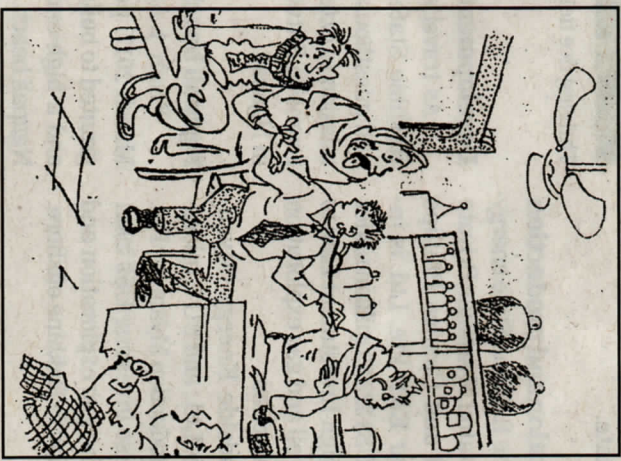
"The General Practitioner provides personal primary and continuing medical care to individuals, families and a precise population irrespective of age, sex and illness. He will attend his patients in his consulting room, in their homes and sometimes in a clinic or hospital. His aim is to make an early diagnosis. He will include and integrate physical, psychological and social factors in his consideration about health and illness. He will

undertake continuing management of his patients with chronic, recurrent and terminal illnesses. He will practice in co-operation with other colleagues. He will know how and when to intervene through treatment, prevention and education to promote health of his patients and their families. He will recognize that he also has a professional responsibility to the community. (*General Medical Practice, Walton + Beeson, Oxford University Press 1986*)

The general practitioner/family physician cares for the individual in the context of the family, and the family in the context of the community, irrespective of race, culture or social class. He/she is clinically competent to provide the greater part of their care, taking into account the cultural, socioeconomic and psychological background. In addition, he/she takes personal responsibility for providing comprehensive and continuing care for his/her patients. (*A statement from WONCA, 1991*)

Family medicine has evolved at different rates in different parts of the world. For many decades the doctor that the people knew was the family doctor. He was the doctor that was around to look after all members of family "from cradle to grave", whether it was to deliver a baby into the world or to treat an illness or to provide counsel to terminal incurable elderly.

The development of medical science and the hospital at the turn of the 20th century led to better understanding of man, disease and ways of



of hospital based medicine and public health medicine. Family medicine has an important role of being the matrix that glues the various branches of medical sciences together.

The emergence of Family Medicine has been hailed as (a) a rediscovery of the human, social and cultural aspects of health and disease and (b) of recognition of family as a focal point of health care and (c) the right place for integrating preventive, curative and promotive services.

As its key concepts Family Medicine seeks to provide primary, personal, continuing and comprehensive care;

### Primary Care

Family doctor is the doctor of first contact. In primary care, patients present with many and varied health problems, mostly undifferentiated illnesses. Family Doctor usually see patients with multiple problems, co-morbidities occurring simultaneously in one person. They perform screening and gate-keeping function of certain catchments population thus bringing down the work load and economizes secondary and tertiary care. This will result in more cost-effective medical care where only those who need specialized care are referred to the specialist or admitted to the hospital. Moreover, Family Doctor provides acute and emergency care. Early recognition of serious diseases and timely intervention is the best safeguard against complications in diseases.