

SINGAPORE PHARMACY BOARD



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**SPEECH BY MS ANG HUI GEK, CHIEF PHARMACIST, MINISTRY OF
HEALTH & PRESIDENT, SINGAPORE PHARMACY BOARD AT THE
INAUGURAL PHARMACIST'S PLEDGE AFFIRMATION CEREMONY 2008
29 MAY 2008, 6.30PM**

Mr Khaw Boon Wan, Minister for Health

Distinguished Guests, Fellow Pharmacists, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of the Singapore Pharmacy Board, I welcome you to the inaugural Pledge Taking Ceremony for pharmacists. We are greatly honoured by your presence. We are especially grateful to have our Minister for Health to grace the occasion.

2. This is a momentous occasion for all of us. Pharmacy graduates who have recently completed their pre-registration training and many registered pharmacists from both the public and private sectors will be taking their pledge this evening.

The Pharmacist's Pledge

3. The pharmacy profession in Singapore has made much progress over the years as domain experts in drug evaluation, drug use and surveillance. Today, pharmacists play an even more important role in our healthcare system. Findings from the recent Pharmacist Survey 2007 revealed that pharmacists foresee medication reconciliation and management as the major direction for the profession in the coming years. It is therefore appropriate for us as pharmacists to take stock of our own high calling in the healthcare system and to officially and publicly uphold the duty and honour of our profession. It is timely for recent graduands embarking on their careers to take this pledge. This pledge is also for registered pharmacists to reaffirm their first love for their profession.

4. The Pharmacist's Pledge serves to provide a broad, ethical framework for the profession. It has been cleverly and intentionally crafted around the acronym 'PHARMACIST'. From now onwards when we pharmacists think of our calling, the very name of our vocation will recall to our hearts and minds the duties, responsibilities and promises that we make today.

5. Pharmacists when taking the pledge will solemnly promise

To Practice pharmacy with honesty, integrity and compassion.

To Honour the traditions of our calling and embrace advancements in the pharmacy profession.

To Abide by the Code of Ethics for pharmacists.

To Respect patient confidentiality.

To Maintain a high standard of competence through life long learning.

To Act always in the best interests of our patients without prejudice.

To Collaborate with other healthcare colleagues for desired treatment outcomes.

To Impart our knowledge, experience and skills to nurture future pharmacists.

To Strive to provide high quality and cost-effective health services and products.

To Translate scientific advances into better healthcare.

6. As the pledge resonates in our hearts, I hope it will instil a sense of pride and duty to our profession, and reflect our commitment to provide the highest level of care to our patients.

New Pharmacists Registration Act

7. From our inspiring pledge, I would like to shift gear now and briefly speak about the new Pharmacists Registration Act which was passed by Parliament in September 2007. The amendment of the current Act will raise the practice standards of pharmacists and ensure that the nation's laws remain relevant to the practice of pharmacy today. The new Act will come into effect by the end of this year. Let me touch on 2 provisions in the new Act that would translate into improved care for our patients.

The First is Compulsory Continuing Professional Education

8. Henry Ford once said, I quote " Anyone who stops learning is old; whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young." (end quote) So this is the secret formula for longevity! And lifelong learning is also the right attitude to adopt in our pursuit of high standards in pharmacy practice.

9. Pharmacists need to keep up with the latest developments in the field of pharmacy in order to provide up-to-date, high-quality, cost-effective pharmaceutical care. Medical science is constantly evolving and the pharmacy profession wants to keep pace with it. The knowledge that pharmacists possess, like the drugs that they dispense, has an expiry date. Our pharmacists today are thus committed to life long learning, as encompassed in the pledge..

10. We are greatly encouraged that pharmacists are indeed keen to upgrade their skills and knowledge. According to the same survey mentioned earlier, 10% of our pharmacy graduands possess further qualifications – either a Masters, PhD or Doctorate in pharmacy and another 17% had indicated that they intend to pursue postgraduate qualifications.

11. The new Act enables the Singapore Pharmacy Council to prescribe active participation in continuing professional education. This is a pre-requisite for the renewal of practising certificates.

12. Pharmacists will now achieve at least 50 continuing education points every 2 years in order to renew their practising certificates. Pharmacists can garner these points by attending 'Live' events such as professional education lectures, workshops and seminars. Other means are self-directed study of professional journals, online education modules and of course structured post-graduate courses.

13. We are pleased that to date, 93% of our pharmacists have electronically submitted information on the continuing professional education activities that they have completed.

14. As we take the Pharmacist's Pledge today, I am confident that all of us here fully appreciate the importance of life long learning and will enthusiastically participate in these efforts at continuing education.

The Second is the Register of Specialists

15. Another provision in the new Act that will result in patients enjoying a higher level of pharmaceutical care is the establishment of a Register of Specialists.

16. Pharmacists with specialised expertise are increasingly required, particularly in areas such as oncology, cardiology, critical care, geriatrics, infectious diseases and psychiatry. They will ensure safe, evidence-based and cost-effective use of medicines for better patient outcomes. Patients will benefit from a high standard of care with specialist pharmacists providing individualised drug dosing, and medication reconciliation and management that will lead to fewer drug-related adverse effects and complications. The Register of Specialists is dedicated to record the names of pharmacists with such specialised expertise.

17. To increase the number of pharmacists with specialty skills in our public healthcare institutions, the Ministry of Health has set aside \$7 million in scholarships for the next 5 years. One of these is the pharmacy residency training scholarship. \$4.5 million will be invested on this initiative which will

result in pharmacists undergoing –specialist residency training in centres of excellence overseas. The Ministry has also designated funds for scholarships in Doctorate and Masters in Clinical Pharmacy programmes. This will enable pharmacists to gain advanced knowledge and clinical skills needed for specialist practice.

18. I take this opportunity to encourage all my fellow pharmacists to take up the challenge in the areas of postgraduate studies and specialist training to meet our country’s projected need for specialised expertise in pharmacy.

Conclusion

19. In closing, it gives me immense pride and pleasure to extend my sincerest congratulations to our newly registered pharmacists. On behalf of my fellow pharmacists, welcome to the pharmacy profession. I wish each one of you every success in your career.

20. Thank you.

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