

Editorial

A bright future for the specialty

專科的前景，一片光明

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In October 2007, I had the opportunity to visit Hong Kong and act as an External Examiner for the oral certification examination in Emergency Medicine and speak at the Scientific Symposium on Emergency Medicine. The entire experience was wonderful. On a personal level, the hospitality of my hosts was delightful and the city vibrant and enchanting. On a professional level, I was amazed at the similarity between the development of Emergency Medicine in Hong Kong to that in the United States.

In both Hong Kong and the United States, Emergency Medicine grew from a need to treat a growing number of people requiring emergency care, a need that historically had been met by physicians with little specific training in the specialty. As time progressed, a select number of these dedicated practitioners recognized the unique body of knowledge and expertise inherent in emergency care and became the early founders of the specialty. Through the efforts of these founders, curricula were identified, Emergency Medicine training programs developed, and organizations to promote standards of emergency care were formed. Through the efforts of these organizations, Emergency Medicine eventually came on par with

that of other medical specialties. In 1997 the Hong Kong College of Emergency Medicine (HKCEM) was recognized by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, joining 14 other specialties in this elite group. Eighteen years earlier the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) had met with similar success when it was recognized as the 23rd specialty in the United States by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

Similarities in the purpose and activities of the HKCEM and the ABEM are also apparent. Both define their mission, in large part, as protecting and benefiting the public by promoting training and education in Emergency Medicine and both conduct certification examinations for qualified candidates. Both offer a multiple choice question (MCQ) examination followed by an oral examination for those candidates who successfully complete the MCQ examination. Although the number of candidates sitting for the oral examination is proportionally greater in the United States (approximately 720 at each biannual examination as opposed to 20 candidates in Hong Kong), the similarities between the processes are notable. In both regions, a dedicated staff provides the foundation for scheduling and examination mechanics and is essential to the smooth running of the examination process. In both, the examiners are professional and compassionate as they balance the need to ensure that each candidate demonstrates the prerequisite skills and knowledge necessary to care for patients while giving each candidate full

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opportunity to demonstrate his or her knowledge unimpeded by the examination process itself.

Most important are the similarities among the candidates themselves. They are physicians who have demonstrated a firm commitment to the specialty and engaged in years of preparation and training. Each has

the look of hope and optimism for a relatively new specialty that will shape the rest of their professional lives and that of their patients. Truly, in both Hong Kong and the United States, Emergency Medicine has attracted a wonderful group of physicians with dedication to the specialty. Both our founders and our future should be congratulated.