

Family Medicine, Healthcare and Society: Essays

Author: M K Rajakumar

Edited by: C L Teng, E M Khoo, C J Ng

This book consists of articles of collection written by Dr M K Rajakumar between 1974 and 2003 and these articles are edited by three authors. Although the articles were written over a period of time, they are highly relevant even today. These articles are chosen from an extensive list of lectures and publications that Dr Rajakumar delivered and published both locally and internationally.

The book is divided into Section 1 which deals with topics that cover Family Medicine and Section 2 on Health Care and Society. The main strands for the first 11 lectures are the following: Training, CME, Research, Community Involvement, Quality and Recognition of the General Practitioner. Dr Rajakumar emphasises these important topics in his lectures as well as publications. In one of the articles 'The First Williams Pickles Lecture,' he describes the historical development of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons. I personally found that piece informative and interesting and a 'must read' for all physicians. In Section 2 the topics deal on issues related to health care and society. Dr Rajakumar's essays are 'more than just academic endeavours' as mentioned by one of the editors. As summarised by one of the editors, the essays in the second part cover a 'wide range of topical issues from ethics, professionalism, and equity in health care, culture and politics'. All these issues are covered in depth and clarity. In one of the articles he has recognised the fact that 'the failure of the medical profession is to satisfy the emotional dimensions of our patients dysfunctions' and he calls upon the physicians 'to acquire a very much deeper understanding of the complex roots of human behaviour'. Similarly he emphasises the importance of equity in health care by

arguing that 'rural doctors and health centres in wealthier countries should put out their hands to work with rural doctors in poor countries to help impoverished communities.' Other issues covered in this section include managed care, politics of globalisation and some aspects of Malaysian politics. All in, the articles are thought provoking and a number reach beyond the realm of Medicine, providing a perspective of Medical humanities in Medicine.

The book is easy to read as most of the articles are written in simple English and are coherent. The book gives so many views on any single topic that an average reader would not have thought about the various perspectives. The articles are thought provoking and effective and they convey clear messages. The reader will appreciate the style and the knowledge that the author has on the various subjects which are put across succinctly.

The publication is a reflection of the life of Dr Raja Kumar's beliefs in the field of Family Medicine and what he hopes for the future of the profession. It captures the vision of a man who has dedicated his life to general practice as he has added some of the jewels of general practice as specialty. Without doubt, he is a pioneer in the field of Family Medicine and has been fighting the cause of Family Medicine throughout his career as passionately expressed in his writings. The reader will surely be engaged in reading the book and hopefully will be inspired to continue to challenge the cause.

Reviewed by: Professor Dr Hematram Yadav
International Medical University
Kuala Lumpur