

Editorial

Collaboration is the future of paediatric dermatology

With regard to a survey of US dermatologists by the American Academy of Pediatrics published twelve years ago on "*The Future of Pediatric Education: Paediatric Dermatology*", what are the implications of this US survey to the future development of this field in Hong Kong?

Paediatric dermatologists are more likely to practice in a medical school setting. A dedicated paediatric dermatology clinic is the preferable setting for patients, staff and trainees. Being a hospital dermatologist working in the teaching hospital, I fully recognized the importance of joint care to those complex paediatric cases with diagnostic and management challenge. By training, dermatologists focus on care of skin diseases while paediatricians can provide care of all other health aspects of children including growth, development, psychosocial needs and nutritional status, impact of dermatologic treatment to child health. The need of special attention of childhood skin diseases has been well recognized by dermatologists. Dr Henry Chan, previous academic dermatologist of both local universities and currently honorary clinical professor of University of Hong Kong has set up clinics devoted to paediatric dermatology in the Department of Paediatrics of both university teaching hospitals (Prince of Wales Hospital and Queen Mary Hospital) in 1997 and 2000, respectively.

The two biggest sources of referrals of paediatric patients to US dermatologists are paediatricians and family physicians who tend to treat more common and straight forward subspecialty

patients, leaving the care of more complex cases to dermatologists. Family physicians and paediatricians are likely to be the gatekeepers for skin conditions in children. *US Dermatologists estimate that over one third of the recent paediatric dermatologic referrals they have received involved an incorrect initial diagnosis or therapy.* It reflects that there are grounds of improvement for clinicians who act as the gate keeper of the health system. Thus, provision of education and training to family physicians, paediatricians and dermatology trainees is essential to ensure that the right cases are taken care of by clinicians of appropriate level of competence. There has been a growing interest in this field that is now integral to all major dermatology meetings. The main theme of annual scientific meeting of the Hong Kong Society of Dermatology and Venereology in June has been devoted to paediatric dermatology in 2006 and 2011. Paediatric dermatology has always been the core topic of the certificate courses in dermatology run by the two local universities.

One quarter of US dermatologists anticipate that their communities will need additional paediatric dermatologists in the next 3-5 years. There is an increasing recognition of the importance of expertise in paediatric dermatology in community. Based on specialist training of Dermatology in clinical assessment, use of diagnostic instruments and understanding of dermatopathology, dermatologists still takes a crucial role in diagnosis of paediatric skin conditions which forms the basis of effective treatment. Lacking the specialist training in

diagnostic skills and operation of dermatologic treatment modalities, such as phototherapy, it can be a major deficiency in the development of paediatric dermatology in its early phase if the core group is limited to one specialty alone.

A platform for sharing expertise, flow of information about guidelines and maintenance of standard of care through training in this rapidly advancing field is long awaited. With this conviction, the Hong Kong College of Dermatologists, formerly named Hong Kong Association of Specialists in Dermatology, established the Hong Kong Society for Paediatric Dermatology that had its first scientific meeting in Hong Kong in 2010. The vision of the society

is to enhance the standard of practice of paediatric dermatology, particularly the care of atopic dermatitis, birthmarks and genetic skin diseases. We aim to create an opportunity for all related disciplines to share their expertise and uphold the standard of care of skin diseases in children such that both paediatricians and dermatologists can have their vital contributions for its healthy development through public education, training, networking and research.

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Announcement

Application for Annual / Exit Assessment, December 2011 Specialty Board of Dermatology & Venereology Hong Kong College of Physicians

Please be reminded that the application for the Annual / Exit Assessment, December 2011 is now open to the eligible candidates, who should be:

1. Registered trainees in Dermatology & Venereology, Hong Kong College of Physicians
2. Qualified for / will be able to qualify for the Annual / Exit Assessment by 30 December 2011

Those who wish to attend the Assessment should complete the Higher Physician Training (HPT) Annual Assessment Application Form or the Higher Physician (HPT) Exit Assessment Application Form plus Testimonial to the Examination Co-ordinator of the Specialty Board of Dermatology & Venereology on time according to the requirement of HKCP. You may refer to the website of Hong Kong College of Physicians www.hkcp.org for detail. Late applicant will not be able to sit for the assessment.

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Chairman
Specialty Board (Dermatology & Venereology)
Hong Kong College of Physicians