

### **In Remembrance of Professor Anthony J Hedley**

We were all so glad that Tony could come back to see everybody at the Hong Kong Public Health Forum 2014 on 8 December. The Forum was specially organized by the School of public Health of the University of Hong Kong to pay tribute to him.

In the words of Professor Malik Pieres, "The Forum is a celebration of Tony's significant contributions to the city of Hong Kong and to the art and science of public health globally. The School is delighted that Tony could personally witness and participate in this momentous event in his honour, the memory of which would be dearly cherished by Tony and all of us at the School."

He was very frail then. Dr James Kong, who went all the way to accompany Tony from his home in England back to Hong Kong, had to support him with repeated injection of medications. He was in wheelchair, and had to be supported to go on stage to participate in the discussions. When it was my turn to chair the last session, James wanted me to sit beside him to hold his hands to keep him alert. When I did that, he held his head and greeted me softly, "Ah, Fung Hong!" and gave me a warm smile. That touch, brought me the "memory of his days in the sun!"

I had never been a student, trainee or subordinate under Tony. But I had the privilege of working closely with him in several occasions which allowed me to learn from his life attitude, work ethics and leadership quality. We started to work together on two health services research projects to study the utilization of accident and emergency service and specialist outpatient service in the days of the Hospital Services Department, with the permission from the late Dr TY Chau. I wonder if those were the first health services research studies conducted in Hong Kong.

It was through this collaboration that I first heard him talked about his earlier studies in diabetic care and patient held records, and his critical view on how services should be improved based on evidences generated from health services research. At the Hong Kong Public Health Forum held on 8 December, I met Professor Ray Jones who worked with Tony on diabetic care and patient held records two decades ago before he moved to Hong Kong. Ray did not know we had a shared journey with Tony.

Some years later, the government wanted to set up the Health Services Research Fund (HSRF) under the Hospital Authority. I was asked to work with Tony on the administration of the Fund. Tony brought Sarah McGhee with him to help running the grant applications and award. He worked on HSRF with great passion and devotion, laying down the necessary policies and guidelines for its operations, setting up the Expert Committee on Grant Applications and Awards with extensive engagement of the academicians from both universities. He was very clear in his mind how he wanted health services research to create impact on the delivery of health services. He started the publication of the dissemination reports for the completed projects.

Sitting through those whole day long grant application meetings of the Expert Committee was probably the most boring thing for me at that time. Not coming from an academic background, I had difficulties in following the academic experts in reviewing the grant applications at the meetings. I was amazed by how they could spot problems speedily from the documents that were often typed in small fonts and long paragraphs. Tony's leadership in those meetings was exemplary. His critiques and comments were always incisive. He was able to lead the Committee along the direction of facilitating and providing positive feedback to the applicants. HSRF was later being transferred back to the government and renamed. But the foundation had already been set by Tony.

My third association with Tony was at the College when we started to try to establish Administrative Medicine as a subspecialty. Tony played a leading role in the process, especially in establishing the training guidelines and requirements. He invited me and several other colleagues to participate in the discussion on the core competency required for training in Administrative Medicine. It seemed to me that he already had a roadmap on what had to be done right from the outset. He was speaking from his mind what good leadership should be in healthcare services. It was scholarly, but full of common sense. He did not live in an ivory tower.

I can't remember the exact year when we were both attending the Annual Conference of the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) in Perth. We decided to run together along the Swan River. It was a windy and cloudy day. As we ran, we talked about life, work, running and public health in Hong Kong. He was passionate about everything he did. He could not help expressing his critical comments on some of the public health decisions made by the government. It seemed the word "compromise" was not in his dictionary.

In 2012, the RACMA Annual Conference was held in Perth again. This time, the weather was wonderful. I went to run along the Swan River again, all by myself. I could not help thinking about Tony along the way, knowing he was in serious illness then. What would public health in Hong Kong be like without him? Would there be Administrative Medicine at all without him? Who else could run with me?

Tony passed away on 19 December, 2014, eleven days after he met everybody in this place where he had devoted most of time in his career. It is also at this place, that he has won the greatest love, respect and admiration. May him rest in peace!