The idea of introducing specialist registration in Hong Kong was first considered by the Medical Council in 1968. In November 1979, the Medical Council formed the “Working Party on a Specialist Register for Hong Kong”. The Final Report of the Working Party was submitted to the Medical Council in July 1982. One of the conclusions reached was that the postgraduate training of doctors in Hong Kong at that time was inadequate, and it recommended that the professional training of doctors intending to specialise should be improved as a necessary step towards the setting up of a specialist register.

In August 1983, a joint ad-hoc committee was set up to examine the recommendations of the Working Party on a specialist register for Hong Kong. The committee concluded that the legal requirements for training after registration in Hong Kong at that time were inadequate. An establishment with improvement of facilities for specialist training was required as a step towards having a specialist register of Hong Kong.

In March 1985, the Medical Council decided that action should be taken to deal with, firstly, the design/organisation of suitable postgraduate training programmes for registered medical practitioners and secondly, to set up an accreditation body to grant recognition to such programmes. The creation of a specialist register would be considered later when the first two stages were completed.

In October 1986, the Hong Kong Government established a Working Party on Postgraduate Medical Education and Training. The Report prepared by the Working Party, which was published in October 1988, recommended that there should be a “Hong Kong Academy of Medicine” composed of Fellows accredited after completion of approved training and prescribed examinations.

In February 1990, the Hong Kong Government established the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine Preparatory Committee. The Preparatory Committee completed draft legislation and submitted it to the Executive and Legislative Councils in December 1991. The Hong Kong Academy of Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 419) was passed by the Legislative Council on 25 June 1992 and came into effect on 1 August 1992. The Government appointed an Interim Council, comprising six Officers (office-bearers) and the Presidents of 12 designated Academy Colleges.

Professor David Todd was appointed President of the Interim Council. After scrutinising and approving the

constitutions of the 12 designated Academy Colleges, namely Anaesthesiologists, Community Medicine, Dental Surgeons, General Practitioners (now called Family Physicians), Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, Orthopaedic Surgeons, Paediatricians, Pathologists, Physicians, Psychiatrists, Radiologists and Surgeons, the Interim Council formally admitted these 12 colleges as Academy Colleges. Two Faculties, namely Ophthalmologists and Otorhinolaryngologists, were also admitted under the College of Surgeons by the Interim Council.

An Inaugural Ceremony, attended by over 167 overseas dignitaries, was held on 9 December 1993 during which over 2,000 Fellows were admitted according to the admission criteria set by the Interim Council. The Interim Period ended on 19 July 1994 when the first annual general meeting was held. On 2 October 1995 two new Academy Colleges, namely the College of Ophthalmologists of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong College of Otorhinolaryngologists, were admitted at the 2nd Annual General Meeting. These two Colleges were formerly Academy Faculties under the College of Surgeons. On 16 January 1997 another new Academy College - The Hong Kong College of Emergency Medicine was admitted, increasing the total number of Academy Colleges to 15.

Currently, the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine is the highest academic organisation in Hong Kong that is established by statute. It has the mandate to maintain the standard of specialist training and specialist continuing medical education (CME) and continuous professional development (CPD) in the territory. The Academy has 15 Medical and Dental Colleges. Over half of the registered medical practitioners in Hong Kong are Fellows of our Academy. The number is now over 5000. They have all gone through at least six years of structured training in accredited centres, under the supervision of accredited trainers, and have passed the intermediate and the exit examinations of the respective College. To ensure reaching an international standard, these examinations are either conducted with international partners or have external expert examiners participating. Within the 15 Colleges of the Academy, there are around 60 specialties and subspecialties. At the moment, we have over 2000 registered specialist trainees in the system.

The Academy assists the Medical Council of Hong Kong, the Registration body of Hong Kong doctors, in maintaining the Specialist Register (SR) since its inception in 1997. Fellows of the Academy of Medicine are eligible to be registered in the SR. Under the
Medical Registration Ordinance (Cap 161), a medical practitioner whose name is included in the SR is legally allowed to use the title: "Specialist in a certain specialty". Furthermore, the Academy is responsible for vetting qualifications for temporary medical registration of the Medical Council of Hong Kong.

The Academy is taking the lead in the development of CME/CPD not only for our Fellows, but also for general practitioners who join the CME scheme of the Medical Council of Hong Kong. We are an Administrator, Accreditor and Provider of this scheme. To further enhance and facilitate the CME/CPD activities of our Fellows, we are developing web-based learning. This is done in collaboration with international Academies and Colleges. They include the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons of United Kingdom, Academy of Medicine Singapore, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. We have a common goal of promoting life-long learning in medicine and conducting research on knowledge transfer. All Fellows are required to fulfil cyclical CME/CPD requirement in order to maintain their status in the SR.

Our Academy is committed to taking an active role in improving the health care provision in Hong Kong through our involvement in postgraduate professional training of doctors and dentists. We continue to advise the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government on matters related to health and health regulations. The Academy strives to serve the Community of Hong Kong, China Mainland and the World.

Life is full of turbulence. The economic tsunami last year has resulted in global financial meltdown and a panic state. We have witnessed a massive breakdown of confidence to the financial system worldwide.

Quoting Democritus, a Greek philosopher (460 BC - 370 BC):

"Do not trust all men, but trust men of worth. The former course is silly, the latter a mark of prudence."

How about the trust of our health care service? Our profession has long been enjoying a high respect from the society. This is built on solid foundation of clinical excellence, dedication and empathy. We need to sustain this hard-earned trust. This was challenged by SARS in 2003 and we survived it. At the time of writing, we have the human swine flu at our doorsteps.