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From Meal Replacements to New Cancer Drugs, How Can We Cope with the New Medical Era?

Dr. Godfrey CF Chan

Editor



Dr. Godfrey CF Chan

When I was a medical student not too long ago, textbooks and a number of paper- journals were the main source of medical information. To search for medical data, it required one to search through a large paper-back book known as "Index Medicus" in the library. Textbook such as "Harrison's Textbook of Internal Medicine" was still a single volume masterpiece by then. Team heads and seniors were absolute authority and when confronted with controversial management issues, final verdicts often have to depend on "expert opinion" and "experience by recall". Though many of these were precious and reliable information, quite a number of them would be subjective and hard to verify.

Upon entering an electronic era, the world of medical education has changed. With the explosion of information available in all fields of science, numerous textbooks and journals can be found now. For general study purpose, textbook even in double or triple volumes, can no longer cover all the salient or core information required with adequate depth. Most articles from reputable journals can now be downloaded from the computer via the internet within the reach of your finger tips. Due to the easy accessibility of medical information, seniors currently involved in educating and training the juniors can no longer give medical advice based on their memory and subjective preference alone. They have to update regularly and base their advice on data derived from "evidence-based" assessment.

The world of medical knowledge is expanding very rapidly. How can we cope? In this issue, in terms of management, we can see the change in concept ranging from meal replacement products for weight reduction to the new therapeutic agents for juvenile idiopathic arthritis and cancers. Similar advances were also found in some common problems such as respiratory infections in children, we can now identify many of the causative viral agents within a short period of time. New preventive and therapeutic agents will surely followed. While the number of new therapeutic agents keeps expanding and it will be hard for us to digest them all. Our problem nowadays is how we can extract the essence from the vast medical information available. When I searched through the literature for the new targeted anti-cancer agents, thousands of articles flush out and one can simply be overwhelmed.

There are different medical journals, digests and bulletins available locally. How our Medical Diary can serve our colleagues from different member societies in a meaningful ways is always a challenge to our Editorial Board. One of the aims of our reformed series of Medical Diary is to provide you the reviews of the latest information on some relevant topics by various experts in the fields. We hope this can refresh and help you in your busy practice. Facing with the current trends of encouraging self learning, we also launch our first CME evaluation through the CME programme of the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK) in this issue. We hope that you find our Diary useful and we welcome your feedback and comments.