MEDPED newsletter

MEDPED comes to Singapore

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Singapore became a collaborating centre with MEDPED in 1997. The Committee in Singapore is comprised of a group of endocrinologists, cardiologists and laboratory physicians, each with an interest in disorders of lipid metabolism.

We officially launched MEDPED Singapore with the Singapore National Heart Association in June 1999. This took the form of a press release and a series of lectures, which were part of National Heart Week. We delivered three lectures to members of the public, to physicians and to nursing staff to educate them regarding familial hyperlipidaemia and the role of MEDPED. Following the initial launch, members of the local committee have been involved in the provision of talks and lectures to small groups of doctors who have expressed an interest in the program.

Merck Sharp and Dohme have agreed to fund the initial 2 years of the program in Singapore. They have committed S$30 000 to help pay for educational material, stationary and a part-time research assistant. We have widely distributed two educational pamphlets we prepared. The pamphlet for physicians contains a diagnostic card, which includes the diagnostic criteria for familial hypercholesterolaemia and familial combined hyperlipidaemia. This pamphlet has been sent to more than 3000 physicians in Singapore. We also distributed the second pamphlet to hospitals and to physicians to use in their waiting rooms to educate members of the public. These are also provided to patients currently seen in the lipid clinic, so they can distribute them to members of their families.

At present, MEDPED and the registry of all patients diagnosed with familial hypercholesterolaemia and family members screened, is housed in the Lipid Unit of the Department of Endocrinology at the Singapore General Hospital. We have established a messaging facility that allows members of the public and physicians to reach the MEDPED team physicians. With the press publicity, MEDPED doctors have answered more than 100 requests for information. We aim to begin soon to collect follow-up data, particularly on family members who are found to have hyperlipidaemia through tracing of their relatives.

We have also established facilities for genetic analysis and currently carry out analysis of the LDL-receptor gene for all patients registered with the program. Several mutations have been found, many of which are novel. As yet, we have observed no founder effect. We hope to achieve three initial goals with MEDPED in Singapore. They are:

- education of physicians and members of the public to raise awareness of the existence of these disorders,
- early detection of cases through family tracing and follow up, and
- research to better characterise familial hypercholesterolaemia in Singapore.

Major goals for the future include a search for stable funding for our programs and the employment of a permanent nurse clinician who has been trained to carry out genetic counselling and field work for the tracing of relatives of affected individuals. It is likely that MEDPED will become affiliated with the Singapore National Heart Association, the organisation that is primarily involved in the prevention of cardiovascular disease in Singapore.