

In Fond Memory of Dr. Lo Wai-hoi

K Y Mak, MD, BBS, JP

Vice-President, The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong

Dr. Lo was the consultant psychiatrist who interviewed me at the HKPC (Hong Kong Psychiatric Centre, now renamed the Western Psychiatric Centre) before I joined the Mental Health Service back in 1975. I ‘vol’ (voluntarily) admitted myself into the field of psychiatry, and started my first placement at HKPC, a place standing right across the road opposite my home. Despite the distance of only 100 yards from home, I was not always punctual. But fortunately Dr. Lo did not check on his staff about punctuality, unlike another mental unit head who stood at the doorway to see who was late for work.

Ever since then, Dr. Lo has been one of my tutor-advisors in psychiatric training. He is very supportive of psychiatry in the world arena, even encouraging me as a junior trainee to attend the World Federation of Mental Health in Vancouver and present a paper on immigrants in Hong Kong. This had ever since initiated my interests in psychiatric research which can really become a hobby if not an addictive subject.

When I was qualified for the scholarship for further psychiatry training in the United Kingdom, Dr. Lo asked me which subject I would be interested in. I answered ‘Child Psychiatry’ as my choice, since I had been hesitant whether to start my career in psychiatry or in paediatrics after my medical housemanship. To my surprise, Dr. Lo answered “this is a subject for woman!”. I wondered why, as I had some recollection that Dr. Lo himself had some training in child psychiatry in the U.K. As a result, I switched to Adolescent Psychiatry instead.

On return to Hong Kong after training, I was working at the HKPC and then the CWPC (Chai Wan Psychiatric Centre, the only psychiatric OPD on Eastern Hong Kong before the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital was built), I had to meet Dr. Lo fairly often. At times, he would call me up to his office or telephone me, asking “Dr. Mak (usually a raised tone for my surname, perhaps part of his native dialect?), do you know about this issue in psychiatry”. Naturally I responded positively with what I knew about the subject. When I finished, Dr. Lo then said: “Dr. Mak (again a raised tone), then you prepare something or plan something on this for me.” Then I started understanding that I had been trapped. However, I continued to fall into the trap repeatedly throughout the years, perhaps subconsciously delighted to do so!

While working in CWPC as centre-in-charge, I was quite enthusiastic about community psychiatry. I had good liaison relationships with various government departments and other agencies including the churches in the Eastern District of Hong Kong. Together with the occupational therapist of the Day Hospital, we arranged various outside activities such as Tai Chi class in the polyclinic backyard, basketball playing in the nearby Methodist church, etc.. Dr. Lo was supportive

of these except the 'swimming class' in the neighbouring public swimming pool, with the reason that patients might be drowned. I was astonished, as such patients after training would actually less likely be drowned if they chose suicide by jumping into the sea! Though rather cautious by nature, Dr. Lo was quite 'free reigning' and let you do things you think appropriate, provided they are 'legitimate'. Therefore such 'rebellious and risky' activity was continued behind his back, under the supervision of a qualified swimming coach from the Urban Services Department!

As an amateur manager of a clinic, Dr. Lo had given me a lot of valuable advice. I well remembered that when I graded one of my staff with 'A's' in all areas for his first performance report, Dr. Lo said that although I did appreciate this staff, it might not be good to him for such first grading, as I could not show his improvement in performance in the subsequent reports. I found this very valuable and I had since been advising others about this principle. It was thus with reluctance that I left such an exemplifying teacher and the Mental Health Service, due to family reasons.

When I was Vice-Chairman and then Chairman of the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong whom he was one of the founders, he was quite supportive of me with valuable advice as the Vice-President and then President of the Association. He personally attended many of the functions, and had chaired many Annual General Meetings. In a way, Dr. Lo had been very successful in developing and raising the status of Hong Kong Mental Health Service, not only locally but also in the world.

All these years, my contemporaries and I are very aware (and quite envious) that he has been blessed with a 'virtuous wife' (a term used in the Proverbs of the Bible, chapter 31), without whom he would not be so 'successful', and we all know that his children are his pride and glories!

Dr. Lo is deeply missed, and it is with heartfelt gratefulness and honour that I could write down such very fond memories of the past years!

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." – William Arthur Ward