

Foreword to the Caring Physicians of the World

by Yank D. Coble, MD, MACP, MACE
President, World Medical Association

**“The most important thing is caring, so do it first,
for the caring physician most inspires hope and trust.”**

Sir William Osler

This book is about 65 very special physicians in 58 countries, selected by their National Medical Association colleagues. All are heroes, many are unsung heroes, and all exemplify, despite their enormously disparate environments and circumstances, the three fundamental and enduring traditions of the medical profession, caring, ethics and science.

These three traditions have defined physicians for centuries from Cape Town to Cairo, and now from the Arctic to the Antarctic. But why caring first? Caring and ethics without science have been described as merely well intentioned kindness, not medical care or the practice of medicine. Would not the commitment to prolonged and intensive scientific education, and the understanding and utilisation of the modern medical knowledge on behalf of patients and the public, make science most important?

And why isn't ethics the most important? Would not the commitment to maintaining the highest levels of competence in the art and science of medicine and placing the interest of the patient, of whatever race or religion, potentate or prisoner, before personal and professional interests, before government or employer or insurer, make ethics most important?

'I don't care how much you know (about science and ethics) until I know how much you care.' (Anon)

A physician can never know all of the art and science of medicine, even of the sub-specialised

components, or fully understand all ethical complexities. But the patient must have confidence that the physician will obtain the knowledge or skills, or refer, or seek the best available solution to help relieve distress, despair, disease, disability and premature death. To care for and to be careful. To do no harm. The caring physician provides hope and trust to the very young and very old, the very rich and very poor and the educated and uneducated. Even if the physician is of a different culture, race or religion than the patient, caring inspires hope and trust.

It is now well accepted that those who have hope and trust find more comfort, heal faster, and need less pain medication. It has long been known that those who best kindle hope and trust are the best leaders. They instill enthusiasm and optimism. Thus, it is no surprise that the caring physicians of this book are successful social leaders as well, on behalf of the public's health, scientific progress, society's resources, and the welfare of humankind. The exemplary caring they have demonstrated in so many ways has earned the respect and admiration of their colleagues who selected them for recognition. We congratulate each of these remarkable persons and look forward to our next opportunity to recognise more of the caring, scientific, ethical physicians of the world, and the values they represent.

Yank D. Coble, MD, MACP, MACE
President
The World Medical Association