

Keynote Speech
From Humanized Health Care towards Humanized Society
: The Thailand's Experience

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Dear Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

I would like to express my appreciation to the conference organizing committee for inviting me to give a speech today. The committee may have invited me because of my face. Look from any angle, I look Chinese. This is because we share the same ancestors. We are a brotherhood.

At the same time, we are all brothers and sisters globally because we are living in the same world.

In truth, the experience of Thailand that I am going to present today is the minor experience of a small country if compared with that of a powerful country such as China. But my presentation today is an opportunity to learn together and to share together. This will lead to a beauty and variety of actions in the future.

If we look back a hundred years ago, we can see that healthcare was part of our way of life and the life of our community. Health care was about providing care in a moral and humanized manner in the community. We could describe this as "Humanized Caring". Those who know more, help those who know less. In Thai, this is called "Yaa Khor Mor Waan" in which those who have medicine will share it with those who do not and those who can heal will help those who are ill. These kinds of health services were not for sale.

As our country has developed, the culture, knowledge and technology of the West have flowed in. For almost a century, health has become institutionalized in relation to medical treatment, patient care,

surgery, drugs, medical technology, hospital etc. The health system has gradually departed from our way of living.

The health system has run parallel with the direction of national development which is tied in with the industrial revolution and capitalism and most recently this has shifted to globalization. In today's world, economic growth is given top priority. Everything has moved towards materialism. Health care has been also incorporated in this ideology. It is connected with modern technology, money and profit.

Health care which takes into account the human dimension; way of life, culture and indigenous knowledge has dramatically faded away. Money and technology have become the main concern of the service.

In Thailand, half a century ago, Thai traditional medicine and indigenous medicine were discarded. Health became associated with modern Western medicine. There had been huge progress in the development of medical science, surgery and broader medical care. A variety of communicable diseases and dangerous diseases had been conquered in both urban and rural areas. The public could access "Modernized Health Care".

Yet at the same time there was a deterioration of the spiritual dimension, such as humanity, culture, way of life, which is about "holistic health". This is because services oriented towards modern medicine see health in a disaggregate manner, according to each disease or organ system. This phenomenon is called "Seeing the disease but not seeing the person" or "curing disease, but not caring for the patient".

When mentioning the neglect of indigenous knowledge, I have to point out my sincere admiration for the way that China has not only preserved but also continually and actively developed Chinese traditional medicine or Chinese traditional health care. Previous developments have never been disregarded. Despite opening up to Western medicine, Chinese people still use traditional medicine and are not uncritically crazy about Western medicine. This shows the intelligence of the Chinese people.

Let me tell you my own story, some months ago I injured my shoulder blade. I went to see a Western doctor, but my symptoms didn't improve, and I continued to be in great pain. In these last 3 months, I have turned to acupuncture, cupping, Chinese massage and taking Chinese herbal medicines. I recovered remarkably rapidly. The Chinese

doctor treated me with tenderness looking after me both physically and mentally. This experience made a deep impression on me.

In the past 10 years, Thai society has begun to develop and adjust the direction of the new health system. There is a social movement that campaigns “Build Health before Repair”. This movement sees health in a holistic manner in which a physical, mental, spiritual and social dimension of health is necessary to have a balance. Therefore, health is equal to well-being. It is not only health care, but everything because health is an integral part in the way of life and that of society. Everyone, every community should have the right to good health. And this is a role of every one, every community to take part in building good health. Simply it is “Health for all and All for Health”.

In 2007, National Health Act was promulgated. It defines health as the perfect state of human-being in which physical, mental, spiritual and social aspects are in balanced. It also stipulates to have a Statute on National Health System in place as a framework for the national health system development in order to lead to a commonly desired future.

One of the desires is humanized health care in which human dignity, behavior, family, culture and belief are considered in parallel with medical treatment, so that to help patients recover.

A variety of activities and campaigns in Humanized Health Care have been initiated. The Healthcare Accreditation Institute has a mandate to promote the improvement of the quality of health services. Forums on humanized health care are organized to exchange experiences, to appreciate people who do good deeds and to encourage the progression of this kind of development.

The nurse network of Thailand also gives importance to this issue. This network supports the development of HHC including convening the academic conference, in order to raise awareness of this issue in the wider nursing community. This movement is very appreciative.

Whatever good things happen in the health service system, it always starts at nurses, then doctors follow.

Dear honourable guests,

The story that we watched takes place in a province in the North East of Thailand. It reflects that HHC be happened from the hearts of collective people. This beauty is beyond the words.

Dear honourable guests,

The HHC movement in Thailand has been now upgraded a further step. Last two year, the National Health Commission, chaired by the Prime Minister, assigned the National Health Commission Office, where I serve as the secretary general of this office, to run the programme on driving Humanized Thailand's Strategy. This programme persuades Thai people to give significance to the dignity, culture, local knowledge and collective good deeds. We are finding directions to develop the country in a way that merits are respected. Wealth and physical convenience are not an only driving force.

Some activities in this programme have been organizing for example

- Organizing humanized society forums to share about good stories in the society. The public can exchange and learn these stories through the forums and mass media.
- We also have a website as a database of good stories in Thailand. People who are interested can learn and get information from this website.
- We distill lessons learned from these good stories and produce them as learning audio and video materials. We found many inspiring stories, for example, child centered education, learning for self reliance, conservation and management of natural resources management, volunteering in various kinds of activities.

Dear honourable guests,

Our world today is driven by greed that stimulates global citizens and countries to seek directions for a material wealth and physical convenience. They disrespect the value of being human, dignity, equity, cultures, and local knowledge which are diversified according to race, ethnicity and region.

This is therefore a cause of exploitation bringing about social inequity, conflict, crime and violence. Increasing unhappiness.

It seems global citizen are obviously convenient in terms of material, but the gap of inequity is still very high within a country and among countries. Human is not that happy. In fact, we tend to miserable.

This is because of the material led development which turns down the dimension of humanization. It causes unbalanced development. The whole world cannot easily find peace. Genuine well-being hardly happens.

The strategy of Humanized Society, that Thailand is driving, is just a little attempt. Let say, we think globally but act locally. The fruits of this work cannot not be seen clearly, but we hope that what we are doing can inspire the spirit of the society. We believe the public are now ready to work together to perform good deeds on a broader basis, and awaken our society to the value of making merit.

This strategy is incorporated with the philosophy of the sufficiency economy initiated by His Majesty the King of Thailand. He guides the direction of the development to be in “a middle path” where the society does not fall into any extremist ways. The people live with caring and supportive behavior. We can put this as “Humanized Society” where the people and the society are in peace.

This is our dream in which we are trying to escalate our social movement from humanized health care to humanized society. This task is challenging because we have to transform the way people think in a grand scale.

Therefore, what the outcome will be, no one can tell. But we will keep on moving forward.

Thank you for supporting me and anyone who do for the better world.