

THE HEDLEY LECTURE

28 April 2010

Opening Speech by Christine Loh, CEO of Civic Exchange



It is my privilege and pleasure to introduce Anthony Hedley.

Most of you know him as a Chair Professor of Community Medicine at the University of Hong Kong. Some of you may know he received his medical training in Scotland, and had a distinguished career with a number of famous institutions in Britain before coming to live here in 1988.

On this occasion, I will not list his formal academic achievements because you already know they are considerable. What is important to note in his career path is that he moved from the practice of general medicine to the less financially lucrative field of public health. Professor Hedley made a choice early on to focus his research findings into advocacy and public health policy.

Public health is about preventing disease and promoting good health through the organized effort and informed choices of society. Public health deals with preventative rather than curative aspects of health; and it deals with population-level rather than individual-level of health.

In the 1970s, Professor Hedley was responsible for developing the Scottish and Trent Thyroid Follow-up Registers, and the Nottingham Diabetes Clinical Information System. In the 1970s and 1980s, he worked on the risk approach in maternal and child health in Nottingham, Geneva, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Fiji and China. He also worked in Thailand to help develop the Khon Kaen University Health Sciences Centre. In recognition of his contribution, he was awarded the honorary degree of MD, presented by the King of Thailand. Indeed, Professor Hedley continues to do work in Thailand.

In 1999, he received a World Health Organization medal for outstanding contributions to public health. I first met Professor Hedley when I was a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. In the 1990s, we collaborated on pushing through tobacco control legislation, where I was able to observe his passion and dedication to the cause.

One of the best things the Hong Kong Government ever did was to have appointed Professor Hedley as the chairman of the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health, a position he served from 1994 to 2002 with great energy.

Professor Hedley is Hong Kong's most eloquent advocate to fight air pollution. His adversaries may be annoyed with him for not letting up but I know he has their respect because Professor Hedley is right on the big message.

He leaves with us a range of important public health research, as well as the Hedley Environmental Index – a unique tool he has created along with colleagues at the Hong Kong University community medicine team. This index is the first of its kind in the world to track real-time air pollution and public health costs in Hong Kong.

To commemorate the retirement of Professor Hedley and to make his long service in the Department of Community Medicine, School of Public Health at the University of Hong Kong, and health sector of Hong Kong, a scholarship fund is being set up. This aims to improve public health knowledge and understanding in Hong Kong and the region. It will be used to contribute towards the Master of Public Health degree fees

for one or more students and to facilitate visiting professors to instruct the course. Please make a contribution.

I would not be doing Professor Hedley justice without saying a few words about the 'private' Tony. Not only are his intellectual and critical abilities awesome, he also has a keen artistic eye. Tony Hedley is a wonderful photographer.

He enjoys nature and outdoor life, and intends to do a lot of walking on the Isle of Manx where he is going.

Tony likes moving objects too. He has a collection of vintage automobiles waiting for him in the garage of his cottage on the Isle of Man; and he wants to get his flying license renewed so he can zoom around like the Red Barron.

Permit me to say one last thing. Tony Hedley is a very rich man. He is not only well-endowed with many talents but to also have the luck of love and romance. He was able to capture and sustain the attention of Sarah McGhee, to whom he is now married. He told me this morning he is thinking of taking up cooking so he can cook for Sarah.

May I invite Professor Hedley to speak to us now.