

The Year in Retrospective & The Way Forward

As we begin our new Council's term of office for the year 2002/2003, we reflect upon the work we have done in the past one year, and gaze into the crystal ball of the future.

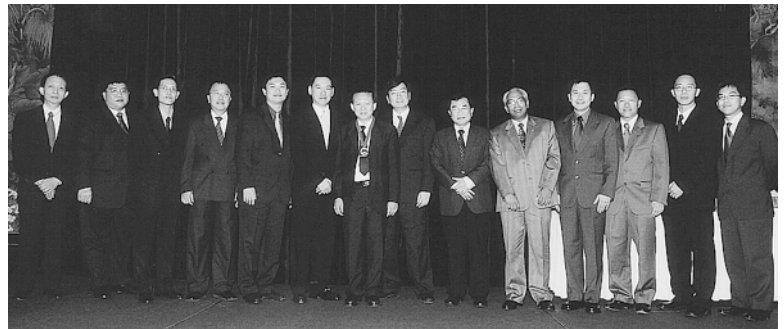
Although we have done well and carried out many programmes to meet the needs of our members and the healthcare consumers, the year ahead is going to be even more challenging, definitely more demanding, and will tax our strength and determination to serve our medical profession and our patients even better than before.

Last year, we began our term of office with a strategic planning session. We formulated our visions and laid the pathways for our programmes, and also a budget to work within our means. The programmes were grouped under three headings:

- 1) practice-related issues
- 2) training, education and professional development
- 3) guidelines and issues of advisories for our members

Among the numerous activities carried out successfully, I'll just mention a few of the more important examples:

- 1) The Practice Management Seminar on "Surviving Managed Care" was successfully organised on 9 September 2001. The SMA Council had considered the issues raised at this seminar and have decided to conduct a Managed Care Survey later this year. We urge members to participate actively in this survey so that the information gathered will be useful.
- 2) The 2½-day course on "Healthcare Ethics Consultation", held from 1-3 November 2001 was very well-attended.
- 3) The Annual Medical Ethics Convention, held from 3-4 November 2001, was also well received. Topics covered included maids employment medical examination, informed



The 43rd SMA Council (from L-R): Dr Lim Teck Beng, Dr Wong Chiang Yin, Dr Tham Tat Yean, Dr Toh Choon Lai, Dr Tan Sze Wee, Dr Chong Yeh Woei, Prof Low Cheng Hock, Dr Lee Pheng Soon, Dr Tan Chue Tin, Dr Ivor Thevathasan, Dr Yue Wai Mun, Dr Chin Jing Jih, Dr Tan Kok Leong, Dr Wong Tien Yin. (Not in picture: Dr Foo Chuan Kit, Dr Theodor Wee)

consent and preparation for court appearances.

- 4) The SMA Lecture for 2001 "Testing the Bolam Test: Consequences of Recent Decisions" was excellently and brilliantly delivered by Mr K. Shanmugam.

We are also happy to note that the two series of ongoing monthly seminars to educate our members on medico-legal and ethical issues, organised in collaboration with the Singapore General Hospital and the Tan Tock Seng Hospital, are well received. These sessions are organised with the aim of helping doctors to practise good clinical medicine within a framework of appropriate ethical guidelines.

In the past one year, SMA had issued several advisory statements as guiding points for our members. These include:

- 1) guidelines on dispensing,
- 2) advisory on sale of non-medicinal products from doctors' clinics,
- 3) advisory on professional indemnity protection, and
- 4) advisory on maid employment medical examination.

In addition to the SMJ and SMA News, SMA launched the "SMA Express", a PDA-communication channel, on 3 November 2001. The SMA website has attracted more than 100,000 hits to-date and

continues to be a source of information for our members who are interested in local and international medical news. Online membership services such as MOPEX and locum services have also been received positively.

We are also glad that we have established regular meetings with the Ministry of Health. The Director of Medical Services has initiated regular meetings with our Council to discuss matters of interest to the medical profession. Our meetings have been fruitful and we are kept in the loop of MOH strategic policies.

On the lighter side, SMA, in collaboration with the Singapore Dental Association, launched the lifestyle magazine "Sensory" in September 2001.

All these achievements and accomplishments could not have been possible without the dedication, hard work and selfless service of all our Council Members, Chairmen and members of various SMA Committees, and staff of the SMA Secretariat.

I am greatly indebted to all my colleagues in the Council and the Committees. I would say that 90% of all my work was done by them. To them, I say a big "THANK YOU!"

While we are happy with our achievements of the past one year, there are areas that need to be strengthened. The way ahead is even more challenging and perhaps more demanding.

43RD SMA COUNCIL

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Dr Yue Wai Mun

In the coming months, a few major events are being lined up:

- 1) In July 2002, we will co-organise, with the Singapore Medical Council, a seminar on “The SMC Disciplinary Process and Professional Misconduct”.
- 2) In November 2002, SMA will host the Mid-Term MASEAN Meeting in Singapore. Dr Wong Chiang Yin will spearhead the Organising Committee.

We hope that doctors will participate actively in these programmes which aim to assist them to be better informed and better educated to practise safe and ethical medicine.

As for the challenges ahead, I would highlight the following:

- 3) An area of great concern for all doctors is the increasing vulnerability to medical litigation with higher patient expectations. In some countries, this issue has reached a critical point that

threatens effective medical practice. In prevention of this, SMA has set up a workgroup to look at ways of reducing medical accidents and improving patient information. Both the patient's and doctor's rights must be respected. The workgroup, with representations from the medical defence organisations, medical and legal practitioners, has been formed. It is expected to submit its recommendations to the SMA Council by July 2002.

Finally, the issue of compulsory CME is of concern to some of our colleagues. SMA has been working closely with the Academy of Medicine, the College of Family Physicians and the Singapore Medical Council, to develop a programme that is practical, achievable and effective. In developing the programme, we have always borne in mind the needs of our colleagues who work long hours and are in solo practices. Be assured that the SMC-CME Coordinating Committee of

which we are represented, is fully aware of the needs of our colleagues who are stressed and overworked. Any feedback on how to fine-tune the system will be welcome. At the end of the day, we must realise that CME is practised universally and it is better that in Singapore we police ourselves rather than wait for someone else to police us. We seek your understanding in this.

In conclusion, my dear colleagues, the future ahead is challenging and demanding. I look forward to your continued support as we work together, through SMA, and build a healthcare system that is cost-effective, and of a high standard.

We will continue to work in collaboration with our sister medical organisations, the Academy of Medicine, the College of Family Physicians, the National University of Singapore, the clusters, MOH and the private sector, so that together we can make Singapore a safer, cleaner and healthier environment, where we can all live to a ripe old age in a healthy way. ■