

News from SMA Council

By Dr Yue Wai Mun, Honorary Secretary

1. SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE

The Spirit of Enterprise is a non-profit body that aims to promote a more active entrepreneurial culture in Singapore. The SMA Council wishes to congratulate **DR TAN SZE WEE**, who is a recipient of the **Spirit of Enterprise 2004 Award**. Dr Tan is the Managing Director and CEO of Rockeby Biomed Ltd, an ASX-listed (ASX: RBY) biotechnology company engaged primarily in the research, development and marketing of products for the diagnosis and treatment of fungal infections in humans. Dr Tan has been serving on the SMA Council since 1996, and held the posts of Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Assistant Treasurer between 1996 to April 2004.

2. CONFLICTS & DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

The SMA Ethics Committee would like to draw members' attention to Section **4.6 of the SMC Ethical Code and Guidelines**, which states that:

- a) If a doctor has a financial interest in an organisation or service, to which he intends to refer patients for admission, treatment, investigation, or for the purchase of any drugs, medicine or service in the course of treatment, he shall always disclose his interest to the patient before making a referral. (*Section 4.6.1 – Disclosure of interest*)
- b) A doctor shall refrain from obtaining commissions from referral of patients. (*Section 4.6.2 (c) – Financial conflicts in clinical practice*)

The full version of the SMC Ethical Code & Guidelines is available at their website at <http://www.smc.gov.sg>.

Ethically, when referring a patient in his or her capacity as a medical professional, the doctor has to be able to justify / ensure that:

- The referral is in the **best medical interests of the patient**.
- The referral is not made to an activity whose function and mode of operation is in **conflict with or inconsistent with the goals and philosophy of the medical profession**.

If the referral is valid and indicated for the patient, the doctor should ensure that:

- **No undue influence or coercion was exercised in obtaining the patient's consent to the referral**, which may compromise the objectivity of his or her clinical judgement.
- The presence of **valid alternatives, if any, should be made known to the patient** for him or her to exercise an informed choice alternative upon the patient.

The SMA Ethics Committee therefore recommends that doctors, unless justified by best medical interests for the patient, should refrain from referring their patients to an organisation or service which they have vested financial interest. ■