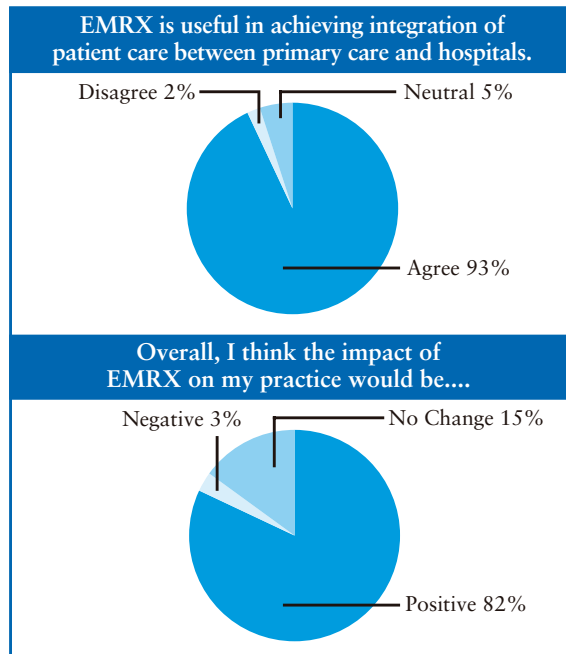


35th SMA National Medical Convention “Seamless Healthcare with EMRX”

By Dr Soh Wah Ngee, Chairman of Organising Committee



The aim of this annual event is to update medical professionals on an important health topic. This year is no exception. The Organising Committee has chosen to focus on the Electronic Medical Records Exchange (EMRX) that has been launched between the two healthcare clusters in April this year. Titled “Seamless Healthcare in EMRX”, the Convention was held on a Sunday afternoon of 25 July 2004 at the Suntec Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

PRE-EVENT SURVEY

We embarked on a pre-event survey to evaluate doctors’ perception and acceptance towards the implementation of a national EMR system. We received an overwhelming response from 363 doctors. The majority agreed that EMRX is useful and has a positive impact on their practices.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

by Professor K Satku

We were honoured to have the presence of our new Director of Medical Services, Professor K Satku, to grace the opening ceremony and deliver the keynote speech. Prof Satku spoke of the need to leverage on IT to facilitate the sharing of critical medical information across the healthcare delivery points. The success of any such system requires the collective effort of all stakeholders, and he felt that the most important of these stakeholders are the doctors.



Prof Satku also discussed the problems that EMRX brings to surface, in particular, protecting patient privacy and maintaining confidentiality. These issues, however, should not delay the progress and achievements of a great worth. He ended the speech by reminding doctors that EMRX is merely a tool, and urged them not to forget to touch and talk to patients.



ABOUT EMRX

by Mr Peter Tan

Mr Peter Tan, a Senior IT Consultant and a member of the MOH Exploit IT Workgroup, shared with us the project team’s journey, from conception to the current stage. He gave a sneak preview of the road ahead, which includes intensifying change management efforts; developing longer term national IT strategy for healthcare; and lastly, connecting more agencies, such as Health Promotion Board and Ministry of Defence, with medical records.



MAKING IT WORK*by Associate Professor Goh Lee Gan*

Associate Professor Goh, a family physician with a strong savvy for IT, talked about how to go beyond the EMRX and make it useful for doctors and patients. He presented the concept of a Continuing Care Record (CCR), which is a document that will contain a core set of health information of a patient and can easily be transferred to the EMR of his or her doctors. CCR will then become a record that the patient holds, and this encourages the patient to be responsible for his or her own health. Prof Goh urged all stakeholders to think about a nationwide joint venture to make it affordable and updated.

**CONCERNS ABOUT CONSENT***by Ms Kuah Boon Theng*

Ms Kuah, who represented the Law Society of Singapore, sent out a strong message that sharing of records between institutions can potentially be in breach of medical confidentiality and therefore requires consent. Can we dispense with this requirement? Ms Kuah replied that the Central Provident Fund Board has recently tightened the requirements for hospitals accessing patient's Medisave accounts, which is an example of making the rules on access stricter, rather than more lax, when electronic information becomes theoretically more "available". Ms Kuah gave practical tips on how to obtain consent from patients, and while these steps can admittedly pose some inconvenience to doctors when using EMRX, however, with time and greater familiarity on the part of the public, any teething problems can be minimised in future.



Panel Discussion (from left): A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, Dr Chin Jing Jih, Ms Kuah Boon Theng, Dr Andre Wan, Mr Linus Tham.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all those who have helped to make this Convention possible, in particular, the Ministry of Health, the 45th SMA Council, the guest speakers, our generous sponsors, and the diligent Organising Committee and SMA Secretariat. ■

WINNER OF THE PRE-EVENT SURVEY

Congratulations to Dr Vivien Chong Ee Mei, who has been picked as the winner among the 363 respondents who have participated in our pre-event survey questionnaire on Electronic Medical Records Exchange (EMRX). She has won a resort voucher for a two-night accommodation at the Sila Evason Hideaway and Spa at Samui, Thailand.