

The EDITORS' MUSINGS



Tina Tan

Deputy Editor

Dr Tan is a consultant at the Institute of Mental Health and has a special interest in geriatric psychiatry. She is also an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. Between work and family life, she squeezes time out for her favourite pastimes – reading a good (fiction) book and writing.

This issue was meant to be a lighthearted one and it was almost ready to be published. But January rolled around with ominous developments about the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) from Wuhan, bringing unwanted flashbacks of SARS and with it, much fear and trepidation. Several of our intended articles have thus been delayed until a more appropriate time. However, certain last-minute changes could not be made, and I hope that our readers understand that we've done our utmost given the evolving situation.

In that same spirit of response, SMA's leadership has spent the past few weeks collaborating with the Ministry of Health and College of Family Physicians Singapore to ensure that our colleagues (SMA Members and non-members alike) are provided with timely and practical information, as well as much-needed support. Media interviews were also given. A week after the Lunar New Year weekend, SMA published a special news bulletin (*SMA e-News*) with a focus on the COVID-19 outbreak, comprising tips and practical resources for doctors, and a timeline of events (<http://bit.ly/2SjO5hT>). In particular, the timeline highlights what SMA did to ensure that our colleagues on the ground were empowered with relevant information and sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment. This issue of *SMA News* features the contents of the *SMA e-News*, if you haven't already perused it online. It is thanks to the dedicated staff, Council and various Members that SMA was able to respond promptly to the ever-changing situation on the ground.

Experts have been talking about the need to strike a balance between containing an outbreak and allowing life to go on. Our country's leaders have warned us to be prepared for the long haul. It is hence timely



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Dr Tan is learning new skills and stretching new boundaries in her private practice. Meanwhile, she still juggles the commitments of being a doctor, a wife, the *SMA News* Editor, the Vice-President of the SMA and a mother of three. She also tries to keep time aside for herself and friends, both old and new.

to hear what our telemedicine colleagues have to say about the benefits of a robust system of remote medical consultations, especially during an epidemic.

Another weighty matter is the subject of gender equity. These days, it's probably unheard of that a medical school would impose a quota to limit the number of women enrolling. But it wasn't that long ago when the quota existed for various, probably outdated though well-meaning, reasons. That's changed for the better, thanks to the hard work of the Association of Women Doctors (Singapore) (AWDS). However, local news media recently published results of a Ministry of Manpower study that showed women earning 6% less than men, even with national efforts to close the gap in wages. As I look around my place of work, I wonder if my male peers are truly earning 6% more than I am. And this begs the question: why? I have no easy answers, but I hope that our articles from Dr Gayathri Nadarajan, and A/Prof Gan Yunn Hwen and A/Prof Sophia Archuleta, can throw some light on the issue of gender equity in our local medical scene, and what can be done to continue advocating for this half of the medical profession.

It is encouraging to note that despite the many unknowns in the COVID-19 situation, people are stepping up to help in whatever way they can. Yes, there is fear and apprehension, and human nature is inevitably rearing its ugly head, but all of us in the medical profession must be united in this new frontier. The men and women behind SMA have stepped up their efforts, and will continue to do so.

With that, stay safe everyone, and remember to wash your hands frequently. ♦