

# The SMA

## A FINE VINTAGE AND GOOD FOR THE HEALTH



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The SMA began 60 years ago as a key representative body for local doctors, during the formative years when Singapore was still a part of the British Empire. In those early beginnings, both Scottish and English medicine had a very profound influence on the establishment and growth of Singapore medicine, especially in the training and education of local doctors – a legacy that has endured to present time. We have much to be proud of in how Singapore medicine has evolved from those early uncertain times to what it has now become – a world-class healthcare system with doctors, nurses and healthcare personnel who embody and uphold the highest standards of healthcare delivery, ethics and values.

Medical bodies worldwide such as the SMA constantly contribute to health policy debates, become sounding boards for doctors' concerns and act as a lighthouse and capstone

in relevant medical matters including ethics and professionalism. The Association is surely an important independent contributor to the medical wisdom of crowds. The worrying creep of over-fearful defensive medicine, the erosion of the healthy doctor-patient dynamic, rising healthcare costs and the silver tsunami will become hot-button issues in the near future.

As we look back on 60 years of SMA and Singapore medicine with the conquest of polio and smallpox, and effective control of tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid and so many other diseases, we all surely look forward to the next 60 years where the convergence of science, medicine, enlightened regulation and policy will witness an even more remarkable era of modern medicine in 21st-century Singapore. This can only be good for the patient. ♦

Dr Toh is a senior consultant, clinician-scientist and deputy director of the National Cancer Centre Singapore. He was the former Editor of *SMA News*. In his free time, Dr Toh enjoys eating durians and ice cream, reading, writing, rowing and watching films. Thankfully, the latter four are not fattening.

