

# The EDITOR'S MUSINGS



*Tan Yia Swam*

Editor

The SMA Annual General Meeting was held on 14 April 2019 and the highlights of the meeting are reported in this issue. I am honoured to be elected as the 1st Vice President of the SMA Council. Together with Dr Daniel Lee, Dr Lim Kheng Choon and Dr Benny Loo, we hope that younger doctors will step up and be more active in professional representation, in whichever professional bodies they identify most strongly with – be it the SMA, Academy of Medicine, Singapore, or College of Family Physicians Singapore.

Within the SMA, some simple ways to contribute and be heard include: writing articles for *SMA News*, and being part of the *SMA News* editorial board or SMA Doctors in Training Committee. In a recent chat with doctors in their 20s, I suddenly felt very old. The concerns they face are exactly what I went through, but it felt like a long time ago. They worry about training problems, relationship woes and availability of consultancy jobs, as well as the risk of complaints and litigations.

We cannot deny that we now practise in a more complex environment. Medical knowledge has rapidly expanded, with more and more subspecialties. Some of us are good generalists while

others are ultra-specialists. The medical profession should be helping each other to collectively help patients the best we can.

Medical training cannot just focus on didactic teaching of medical facts and knowledge. There must also be knowledge of national systems, finances, insurance and legal frameworks. It is impossible to cover everything in five years of medical school or even with an additional five years of residency training. These ten years are there to build a strong foundation in medical knowledge. What a doctor needs to learn is how to continuously learn.

I am now just a few weeks into my private practice journey and I am humbled by how little I know about businesses or, in fact, anything outside of surgery. I have told many friends that it feels like a new housemanship posting, except that now, I know my clinical work well – but nothing else. For example, while I knew exactly what surgical options to offer and how to perform the surgery, I didn't know how to arrange the surgery, what forms to fill out and which numbers to call.

It has been a very heartening experience to have many kind seniors reaching out and giving good, sound advice – even for things as simple as the best way to go to

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.

the wards from the clinic! These brothers and sisters in medicine have taught me the true meaning of collegiality and friendship.

I hope that the SMA will be a source of fellowship and mentoring for doctors, in providing a friendly ear to vent to, a shoulder to cry on, or a place of support when one runs into trouble. For the young doctors and medical students, we could also help in career coaching.

As SMA celebrates its 60th birthday, let's remember and honour what our seniors have done for the profession and Singapore. Let's think about how we can build on what they have achieved, and create a better healthcare system for doctors and for patients. ♦