

The EDITORS' MUSINGS



Tan Yia Swam

Editor

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.

I remember learning in medical school that the incidence of schizophrenia is around 1% of the general population. Some people joked that it means two in my class of 200 will be diagnosed with schizophrenia.

We were young and foolish as we had little life experience. Now, two decades later, we have gone through our own various life events – the death of our parents, loss of a child, battles with cancers and major illnesses, and the loss of friends to sudden deaths or suicides.

I believe that those of us who have been through such events emerge emotionally stronger, more mature and probably more empathetic – qualities which I hope will make us better doctors.

Despite the bad press surrounding our profession, I still believe that patients come to us for genuine help. We should humble ourselves and step into their shoes. What do you want from a doctor? And how can you deliver that kind of care?

Tan Tze Lee

Deputy Editor

Dr Tan is a family physician in private practice in Choa Chu Kang. A GP at heart, he believes strongly in family medicine provided by family physicians embedded in the community.

As doctors, we are so busy taking care of our sick patients that we often do not spare a thought for our own health. That is why when illness comes knocking at our door, the first reaction is often disbelief and bewilderment – “It can’t happen to me!”

This issue deals with the doctor who becomes ill, and the articles trace the journey of the doctor taking on the role as a patient. Dr Audra Fong’s article gives us useful advice on how to choose a doctor or a surgeon for our health needs. Dr Bertha Woon looks in from the opposite side, and explores the difficulties and pitfalls of treating colleagues. The article by Dr Foo Swee-Sen and Prof C Rajasoorya explores the challenges of caring for the dying, and gives us a rare insight from an Asian perspective. We also have personal accounts from fellow doctors of their encounters with illness, giving us that rare glimpse of their experiences as patients. We do not value health as much when we are well; only in sickness and when health is gone do we miss it.

As Gandhi said, “It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.” Absolutely. ♦