

## SMA's Letter to DMS on the Future of Residency Programme

At the inaugural SMA National Medical Students' Convention held on 26 August 2017, Director of Medical Services (DMS) A/Prof Benjamin Ong shared with more than 200 medical students his views on the future of medicine, especially on the shift towards a more generalist training programme to meet the needs of the society.

The SMA Doctors-in-Training (DIT) Committee has since received requests from medical students and residents for more information about the definition of generalist training, its implementation at various stages of a DIT's medical journey, as well as the role of generalists in tomorrow's healthcare landscape.

The SMA DIT Committee thus sent the following letter to DMS A/Prof Ong, who has since scheduled a meeting with them in May 2018 to address the concerns about the future direction of residency training.

**22 February 2018**

A/Prof Benjamin Ong Kian Chung  
 Director of Medical Services  
 Ministry of Health  
 College of Medicine Building  
 16 College Road Singapore 169854



Dear A/Prof Ong,

### **Clarifications on healthcare need for more "generalists"**

The paradigm shift from a specialist and hospital-based model to a primary and community-based (including intermediate and long-term care) model, in order to cater to the future healthcare needs of Singaporeans, was recently highlighted at the SMA FutureMed Convention. Many concerns were raised among the medical students and junior doctors through the SMA Doctors-in-Training (DIT) Committee. Hence, the SMA DIT Committee would like to seek clarification on the following items:

- What would be defined as generalist and non-generalist training for residents?
- What role will generalists play in future healthcare provision, and will they be hospital- or community-based?
- Could you highlight the main strategies to incorporate generalist training for undergraduate and postgraduate training?
- Some residents feel that the family medicine residency programme has a lack of recognition, funding, support, and limited number of mentors. What are the specific measures in place to tackle these concerns?

Without clarity and concrete strategies, many students and junior doctors may not readily take up family medicine and "generalists" tracks. This will negatively impact the translation in healthcare models to better care for Singaporeans in the future.

The SMA DIT Committee aims to bridge the communication to the medical students and junior doctors, and relay accurate information so as to highlight their concerns and to clarify their doubts. If there is a committee reviewing the future training landscape for DIT, SMA would be glad to send a representative to further discuss the next step forward for the future of our healthcare system.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Wong Tien Hua**  
 President  
 58th SMA Council

**Dr Benny Loo**  
 Chairperson, Doctors-in-Training Committee  
 58th SMA Council