

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A

DIGITAL HEALTH FUTURE?

Text by Dr Zubin J Daruwalla

In the transformative era that we live in today, the healthcare industry is rapidly evolving with digital health undoubtedly at the forefront. In Singapore, we are fortunate to have forward-thinking leaders and initiatives like the Ministry of Health's formation of a "regulatory sandbox" on a backdrop of guidelines such as the National Telemedicine Guidelines (NTG) and Singapore Medical Council's (SMC) Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (ECEG). However, with the constant and exponentially increasing rate of conceptualisation, advent, trialling and implementation of new technologies in the realm of digital health, how do we ensure that patient safety is not compromised?

In an attempt to answer this and the many other questions our local doctors, as well as other allied health professionals have, the afternoon of Saturday 7 April 2018 saw our PwC South East Asia Consulting healthcare team, in collaboration with SMA, co-host an event entitled "Embracing a Safe Digital Health Future for Singapore" at the Health Promotion Board Auditorium. The event, kindly sponsored by MyDoc, a local and home-grown digital health platform, was an immense success with more than 100 attendees, a majority of whom were locally practising doctors. The introduction and opening address by Dr Wong Tien Hua, then SMA President, set the tone for what was to be an enjoyable, insightful

and educational afternoon. Dr Wong started by very eloquently giving a bird's eye view of the digital health, and in particular, telemedicine landscape in Singapore before summarising both the NTG and SMC ECEG from a clinical point of view. This was followed by my talk on "The Evolution of the Healthcare Industry and the Transformative Future", which touched on the past, present and future of healthcare delivery as we know it. Actual local, regional and global use-cases were also included in the session. Subsequently and just prior to the tea break, clinician, entrepreneur and founder of MyDoc, Dr Vas Metupalle, shared and discussed some real and recent clinical virtual consultations he had conducted, catching the interest of a number of clinicians in the audience.

The afternoon ended with what was a highly anticipated panel discussion. The panel comprised a number of renowned and very well-respected representatives from the Ministry of Health, College of Family Physicians Singapore, SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism, SMC Medical Ethics Committee and NTG Review Committee, MyDoc, SMA, Medical Protection Society, and Straits Law (a local law practice with vast experience in medico-legal cases). While panellists as well as the audience were challenged as they covered a number of contentious issues, the collaborative effort resulted in a generation of informative and educational

insights based on current guidelines, rules, regulations and upcoming legislations, all of which were captured as part of a soon-to-be-released report by our team.

While the potential risks associated with digital health and the practice of telemedicine may seem daunting, let us all be urged to remember the words of Hippocrates in that we should, "First, do no harm." And in doing so, let us all work together in *embracing a safe digital health future for Singapore.* ♦

Legend

1. Panellists for the afternoon. L to R: A/Prof Raymond Chua, Dr T Thirumorthy, Dr Vas Metupalle, Mr Muralli Rajaram, Dr Zubin J Daruwalla (moderator), Dr Wong Tien Hua, Dr Tan Tze Lee, Mr Harris Shum and Dr Tan Chi Chiu

Dr Daruwalla is the head of healthcare for PwC South East Asia Consulting and leads the healthcare consulting team in the region, while remaining a practising clinician with an interest in orthopaedics, and an advisor to a number of start-ups in the digital health and medical education spaces. A healthcare thought leader and strong believer in collaboration, he hopes to bridge the gap between the clinical and corporate sides of healthcare.

