

SERVICE before SELF



More likely than not, each of us encounter individuals who stand out as exemplary upholders of the public service ethos of our profession. This includes those who volunteer amid their busy schedules, those we look up to as our teachers and mentors, and those who serve in the community in various ways. No matter how disillusioned or cynical we may be, it can be argued that the vast majority of us are in this profession because there is some part of us that wants to help those who can't help themselves. Remember those medical school motherhood statements you used to say to yourself before reality hit?

Thus, this month, we bring you an interview with Dr Marcus Tan, a psychiatrist who runs a practice in the heartlands with two of his colleagues, Dr Thong Jiunn Yew and Dr Seng Kok Han, the latter of whom I've had the pleasure of working with some time ago as a resident. The goals of Dr Tan and his colleagues have been to increase the ease of access for mental health patients and reduce the stigma of seeking help.

We also feature an article by Dr Roy Joseph, who is no stranger to many of us in the field of medical ethics. He relates his experience in public service and his journey towards serving as Chairman of the National Medical Ethics Committee.

A/Prof Daniel Fung shares his enriching experience volunteering with

the Singapore Association for Mental Health and recounts how he started volunteering. He also makes a case for why doctors make great volunteers.

I now move on to another subject featured in this issue: generalists. It's the latest new-old term being used by the Ministry of Health and has, as expected, started a nice debate about the roles of specialists versus that of generalists. A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean and his colleagues ask questions about whether such a distinction should even be made. This is especially relevant given the Government's repeated calls for young doctors to choose generalist disciplines, in response to changing population needs.

Prof Helen Smith writes about the importance of research in the primary care setting and how it can help drive the development of primary care in Singapore. Dr Wong Tien Hua also adds to the discussion in his monthly column, about the increasingly crucial role of GPs in Singapore.

As you can see, this month's issue covers a variety of topics, touching mainly on public service and primary care, including the Government's hottest new topic on generalists. As for the latter, I hope that the articles featured will spur further conversation and submissions from my fellow SMA Members. Keep calm and please write in. We'd love to hear from you. ♦



Dr Tina Tan is an associate consultant at the Institute of Mental Health and has a special interest in geriatric psychiatry. She is also an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. Between work and family life, she squeezes time out for her favourite pastimes – reading a good (fiction) book and writing.

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