



Medicine and Law in Practice

An Intricate Matter

Text by Jasmine Soo, Executive, Event and Committee Support

The Annual National Medicolegal Seminar, a collaboration between SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism (CMEP) and the Medico-Legal Society of Singapore (MLSS), saw its fifth run this year. Held on 14 and 15 October 2017 at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Singapore, the seminar received great support from the medical, legal and law enforcement professions, with a turnout of 85 participants for Day 1 and 67 participants for Day 2.

The theme for Day 1 focused on a fundamental principle in healthcare – informed consent. This refers to the process in which the patient and the healthcare practitioner engage in a dialogue about the proposed medical treatment and its associated consequence, risks and benefits.

SMA President Dr Wong Tien Hua commenced the seminar by delivering the opening address. We were honoured this year to have Prof Leslie Chew SC as our keynote speaker for Day 1, speaking on “An American Medico-Legal Export: The Evolution of the Doctrine of Informed Consent and its Impact on Common Law Jurisdictions of the UK and its Former Colonies.”

Many aspects of informed consent were covered through the lectures, including “The Professional Ethical Basis of Informed Consent”, “Legal Aspects of Disclosure – How much to Disclose?”, “Informed Consent as a Process in Medical Practice” and “Informed Consent

in Persons with Diminishing Capacity & Special Settings”. Invited speakers with many years of experience, from both the legal and medical professions, including Dr Anantham Devanand, Ms Kuah Boon Theng, Dr T Thirumoorthy and Dr Peter Loke, imparted their knowledge.

A panel discussion on “Informed Consent in Persons with Diminishing Capacity” followed. Our panellists, Dr Ooi Chun How, Prof Daniel Kwek and A/Prof Tan Poh Lin, addressed many queries pertaining to mild cognitive impairment, patients with psychiatric illnesses, and children and minors.

A second panel discussion on “Informed Consent in Special Settings” involved many panellists from different specialties. These include Dr Victor Ong (accident and emergency), A/Prof Su Lin Lin (obstetrics and gynaecology), Dr Yeo Sze Wei Matthew (aesthetic surgery), Dr Luke Toh (interventional radiology), A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock (primary care), Dr Raymond Ang (dental), Prof Raymond Chua (research) and A/Prof Nicholas Chew (medical education). The panel discussion provided participants with a platform to gain a better understanding on how informed consent is applied in different specialties and work environments. With that, Day 1 concluded with the closing address delivered by A/Prof Lai Siang Hui, President of MLSS.

Day 2 placed emphasis on forensic psychiatry, which requires sophisticated

understanding of the interface between mental health and the law, attracting many participants from the law enforcement sector.

This year, we were honoured to have Justice Aedit Abdullah as our keynote speaker for Day 2, who delivered a lecture on “Forensic Psychiatry and Criminal Justice”. Following which, informative lectures on the topics “Mental Illness and Criminal Offending – Latest Developments”, “Forensic Psychiatric Case Studies and Applications” and “Detection of Malingering” were delivered by Dr Jerome Goh, Dr Kenneth Koh and Dr Gwee Kenji, respectively. Day 2 then concluded with the closing address by Mr Wong Kok Weng.

The two-day seminar garnered positive feedback that it was an “insightful and intriguing seminar” and one participant commended Ms Kuah Boon Theng for being “very knowledgeable in medico-legal issues and well able to advise on best interests”.

On behalf of SMA CMEP, we would like to thank the organising committee who took precious time off from their busy schedules to plan the programme, and special thanks to Mr Malcolm Tan for being the emcee for the seminar. ♦

Legend

1. Participants listening keenly to Ms Kuah as she presented on disclosure-related topics

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