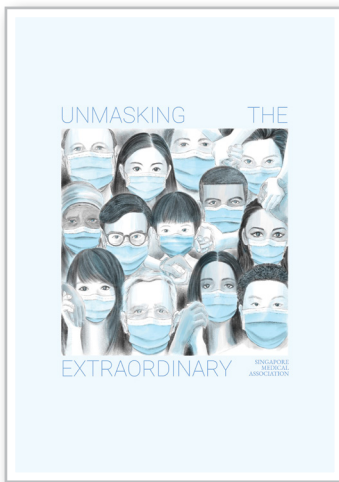


# A Commemoration Less Fleeting

Review by Dr Tina Tan, Editor



**Title:** *Unmasking the Extraordinary*

**Illustrator:** Josef Lee

**Number of pages:** 100

**Type of book:** Hardcover

**Publisher:** Singapore Medical Association

**Year of publication:** 2022

To order your copy of *Unmasking the Extraordinary*, please visit <https://bit.ly/SMABookOrder> or email in to [sma@sma.org.sg](mailto:sma@sma.org.sg).

Dr Tan is a psychiatrist in private practice and an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. She treats mental health conditions in all age groups but has a special interest in caring for the elderly. With a love for the written word, she makes time for reading, writing and self-publishing on top of caring for her patients and loved ones.



I met a prominent emergency department physician at a dinner party some time ago and jokingly told him, "You survived COVID-19!" (meaning to say that he managed to endure the past two years of upheaval at work). He scoffed and said, "Compared to SARS, this was nothing."

I get it. The mortality rate of SARS was much higher than COVID-19. Still, no one can dispute the fact that COVID-19 has had a far more global and prolonged impact, one that has touched practically every single person on this planet in multiple ways.

As with SARS, the time has come to reflect upon the past few years now that Singapore has reopened for business and activities. I have a memory of standing at the window one evening, loudly clapping with my children in the early days of the pandemic. Remember that? It was to salute healthcare workers (HCWs) who were slogging away, trying to manage COVID-19 patients and the messiness of a very scary and unknown situation. That was, however, a rather fleeting moment in the past three years.

I am thus happy to announce that SMA has collaborated with local artist Josef Lee to commemorate the contributions of HCWs and frontline workers in a more permanent fashion. *Unmasking the Extraordinary* is a collection of Josef's 36 comics (drawn through the pandemic, especially during the early days), paired with reflective pieces from healthcare workers. Each quote is heartfelt, touching and a tribute to the individual's experience of working

through the pandemic. It also mirrors our collective experience as parts of the greater whole trying to navigate the effects of a novel and unknown infectious entity.

The world may have celebrated us as heroes at certain points, placing us on imaginary pedestals that did little to ease the burdens of those on the front line. *Unmasking the Extraordinary* is a reminder that beneath the masks and scrubs are ordinary day-to-day people who gave themselves wholly to the cause of fighting the pandemic; people with feelings, hurts and fears; people who soldiered on despite the odds.

This book is not meant to be read, then placed on your bookshelf as a souvenir. It is meant to be shared with as many people as possible. It is not merely a collection of comics and quotes. It is a memory trove, a snippet of history of a time that many of us will not easily forget, nor should we forget the lessons we have learnt from the past three years.

I highly encourage anyone reading this to buy as many copies as feasible. Put it in your clinic waiting area. Put it in your office and show it to new generations of medical students. Distribute it to non-healthcare workers. Show it to your children and grandchildren years from now.

And the best part of this is that all proceeds go to the SMA Charity Fund to support needy medical students through their education.

So, what are you waiting for? ♦