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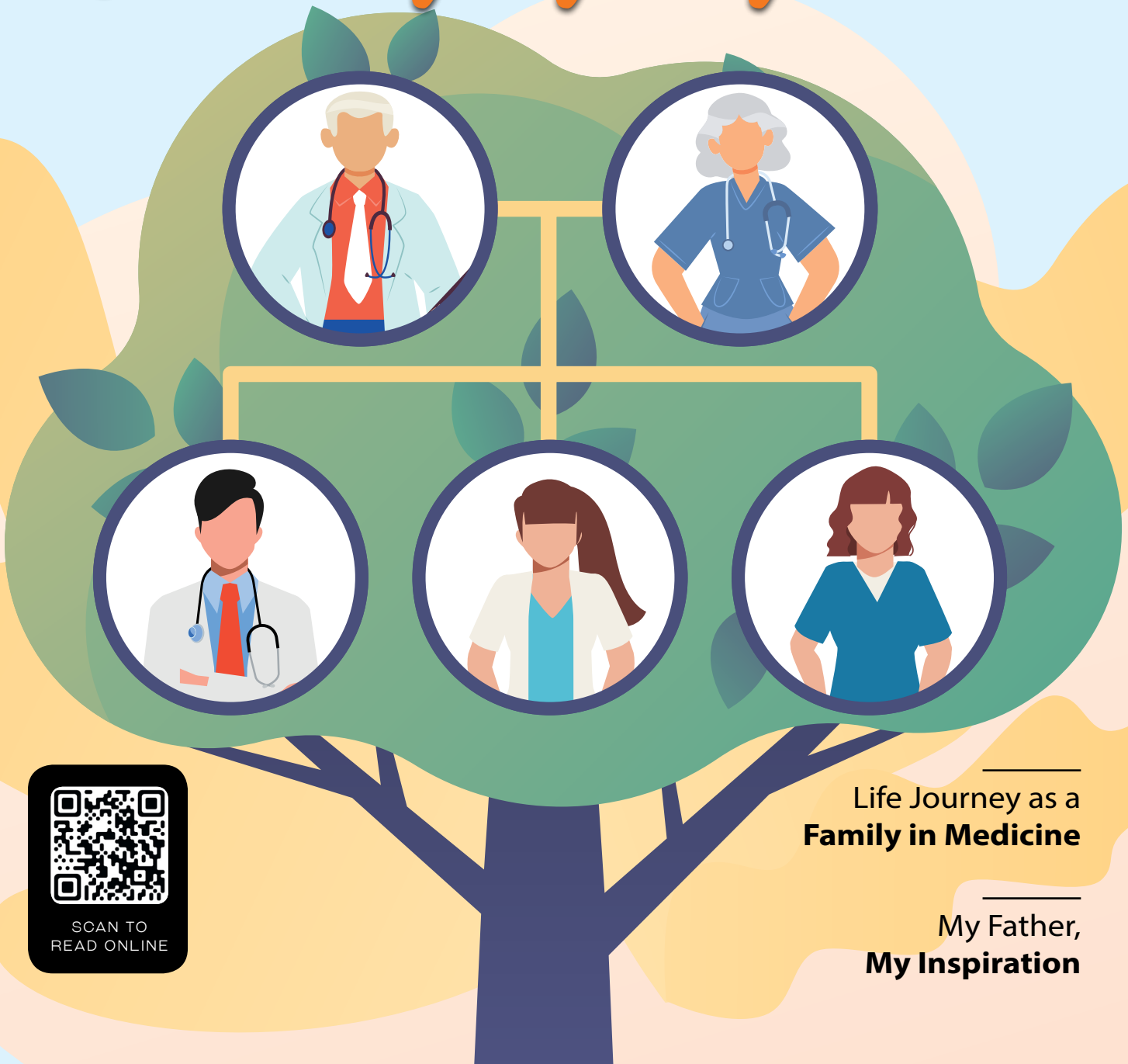


For Doctors, For Patients

## news

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## Families in Medicine: *Journeying Together*



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Life Journey as a  
**Family in Medicine**

My Father,  
**My Inspiration**





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# CONTENTS

## Editorial

### 04 The Editors' Musings

Dr Tina Tan and Dr Chie Zhi Ying

## Feature

### 05 Our Life Journey as a Family in Medicine

Dr Euan Murugasu

## President's Forum

### 08 Like a Parent's Love

Dr Tan Yia Swam

## Council News

### 10 Highlights from the Honorary Secretary

Dr Ng Chew Lip

### 11 19th MASEAN Conference

Denise Tan

## Event

### 13 A Night in Appreciation

Benjamin Ong

## Interview

### 14 My Father, My Inspiration – Interview with Prof Phua Ghee Chee



## Opinion

### 16 The Stories of Siblings

Dr Ng Chee Kwan and Dr Lim Ing Haan

## Letter

### 18 Notes from a Slightly Bigger Island

Tan Wei Loong Wildon and Ryan Chen

## Reflections

### 21 We Are a People

Oviya Ramesh

## Indulge

### 22 Travelling Again in 2022

Dr Jimmy Teo



# The Editors' Musings

## DR TINA TAN

Editor

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 am the first doctor in my family, and the only one on my mother's side. It is hard for me to imagine what it would be like to grow up as a child of doctors or to come from an entire family of doctors. Do dinner conversations evolve into morbidity and mortality meetings or drug talks? Do Christmas presents consist of stethoscope parts or the latest version of the Clinical Practice Guidelines? Is the search for a specialist job one that involves being as far away as physically possible from the sibling/parent practising in *that* particular hospital

or clinic? Is it more challenging to live up to unverbaised expectations?

Our issue this month features thoughts and insights from a number of our colleagues whose parents and/or siblings are also physicians. We have also included two touching pieces from our overseas medical students as they talk about life away from home.

Meanwhile, let us celebrate the fact that as I write this, Singapore has finally hit Disease Outbreak Response System Condition (DORSCON) Green. May it stay that way for a good long time.

## DR CHIE ZHI YING

Deputy Editor

Dr Chie is a family physician working in the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics. She also holds a Master of Public Health from the National University of Singapore and is a designated workplace doctor. She enjoys freelance writing and writes for Chinese dailies *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Shin Min Daily News* and health magazine *Health No. 1*. She can be contacted at chiezhiying@gmail.com.



As I pen this editorial, Singapore has reverted to the much-awaited DORSCON Green after more than three years of battling the COVID-19 pandemic. With the standing down of COVID-19 measures, we have gone back to the good old days of the pre-pandemic era where we can socialise and travel freely (yes, without a mask if you want!). What great fun and joy catching up with family and friends over sumptuous meals and chatters without any restrictions!

In this February issue of *SMA News* on "Families in Medicine: Journeying Together", we explore from the perspectives of various authors how it felt to have a family member (parent or sibling) who is also in medicine.

I would imagine some who come from a family of doctors looking up to their older siblings or parents as role models and be inspired to follow in their footsteps to be doctors. Then, there could also be healthy competition (or rivalry) between siblings and that constant motivation (or pressure) to be better than one's sibling or parent since you are in the same field.

On a lighter note, it is indeed refreshing to read the travelogues and reflections of medical students studying overseas. So, sit back and relax as we ease ourselves into a new world of normal and be sure to take the time to indulge in the things you love to do. ♦



# Our Life Journey as a Family in Medicine

Text and photos by Dr Euan Murugasu

*Doctor in the house? There are five in the Murugasu family.*

*It was a triple celebration for the Murugasu family yesterday. Two of them – son Euan, 24, and daughter Deirdre, 25 – received their Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS) degrees at the National University of Singapore convocation. And another daughter, Belinda, received her Master of Medicine in Paediatrics at the Kallang Theatre.<sup>1</sup>*



This *Straits Times* news report from 1986 now seems like a lifetime ago!

Both my parents are doctors, medical school classmates from the class of 1947, together with Tun Dr Mahathir and Tun Dr Siti Hasmah who rose to the highest echelons of political power in Malaysia. Along with Datuk Dr Wong Soon Kai, who became the Deputy Chief Minister of East Malaysia, theirs was a unique class that came together in the post-World War II days from all parts of Malaya to undertake medical studies at King Edward VII College of Medicine at the Sepoy Lines campus.

My father, JJ Murugasu (well known to many of our SMA Members since he terrorised them as medical students) went on to specialise in paediatric surgery, training in Melbourne in the 1950s, then worked in Singapore General Hospital's (SGH) general surgery B unit. He resigned in the early 1970s and set up the People's Surgery at Selegie Complex.

My mother Ng Chiau Gian was the **real** brains of the couple – always a distinction student, she went on to specialise in her five children while working at the Maternal and Child Health Clinics in Kreta Ayer and Pasir Panjang.

In some ways, perhaps my mother had more influence over our eventual choice of career, as she epitomised the loving and caring primary health doctor.

## Parental influence

Of us five children, my parents had encouraged Audrey and Christopher to consider taking up medicine. They both flatly refused and took up unrelated degrees overseas. My parents then actively discouraged Belinda and Deirdre from doing medicine, and yet both went on to become doctors! By the time it came to me, my parents said: "Go do what you want. After all, none of your siblings took our advice!" This was not much help as I had very varied interests, especially in the arts, music and literature. The only science subject I actually liked was **physics**, simply because there was no "mugging" required in physics, unlike biology and chemistry.

Growing up, I would follow my parents around in the hospitals or outpatient clinics, so I was exposed to patient care from a very young age. I recall my *Ah Ma Che*, a deaf-mute live-in nanny, taking me to the Kreta Ayer Clinic (now an upscale karaoke lounge) and walking the streets of Chinatown and



Tiong Bahru, as we lived at Sepoy Lines where my father was then working.

Later, I would accompany my father on weekend ward rounds at Mt Alvernia Hospital (MAH) where he did most of his surgeries, and so got to meet many of his colleagues: the nuns and the staff at MAH's wards and OT. As I got older, I would sometimes follow him into the OT to observe surgery and witness my father's "infamous temper" and shouting at work! What a terror he could be at times, and yet he always showed great compassion with his patients. My mother would often tell us that he did not charge the poorer patients, and that he also often treated religious patients free of charge. To this day, many people still tell me about my parents' kindness to them or their parents.

So, yes, I did get to see how much good a good doctor could offer to his/her fellow human beings. But I also saw the great stresses of a doctor's life. My father would say to us: "Our patients have to come first!" He even warned my non-medical wife the same before she married me. That is: "you may come second to your husband's patients at times. Can you accept that? You must be aware of this unspoken code." – a reminder of the Hippocratic Oath we took when we became doctors.

This is true – as doctors, our time is not our own. We live at the beck and call of our pager or answering service, especially in my parent's time. I hardly saw my father outside of work. But we did have nice weekend breaks

at St John's Island when our parents volunteered to do the weekend calls there. We often went with the Fung family (Dr William Fung, Orthopaedic, SGH). We would have the entire island to ourselves, and we lived in the spacious British-built bungalows overlooking the cliffs and the Sisters' Islands in the distance. Plus, we had the exclusive service of two Hainanese chefs who cooked for us amazing meals. As a child, it was paradise.

So oddly enough, I looked very much forward to my parents going on-call at St John's Island back in the 1960s and 70s, because that was when we had them present with us most of all.

### Choosing medicine as a career

My A Level cohort was actively encouraged by the Public Service Commission (PSC) to drop science subjects and take up the arts and humanities. PSC even offered full scholarships to Oxford University and to come back to a guaranteed job in the Singapore Administrative Service.

As a St Joseph's Institution boy, I recall being persuaded and cajoled post-O Level to move to Hwa Chong Junior College for the Prom Shaw Scheme (Humanities Programme). The only science career that piqued my interest was medicine and surgery, as I viewed these as incorporating arts and crafts compared to the pure academic sciences.

Perhaps if the PSC had not been so adamant on controlling my future,

I might well have gone to Oxford to pursue philosophy, politics and economics (PPE), or law, but the eternal maverick in me screamed "bloody murder" and doggedly applied to NUS Medical Faculty to spite the system!

When I turned up for my medical school interview, the interviewing panel was blunt in discouraging me from taking up medicine, by stating that I already had two sisters in medicine who would replace my parents. To rub salt into the wound, PSC then offered me a Full Overseas Merit Scholarship to do **any** course except medicine, which infuriated me even more!

In my year, we were subjected to a plethora of IQ and personality tests by PSC, so much so that the NUS and Ministry of Defence got impatient and conducted a balloting exercise to disrupt the pre-medical students for the Vocational Assessment Scheme (VAS) exercises. As luck would have it, almost none of the scholars were balloted! Many of my A Level batch were pushed to the graduating class of 1987 as a result of this ballot.

So, in the end, fate caught up with me after my entire cohort had completed their VAS. I joined the matriculating class of 1981 after term had started. One day I was running around SAFTI Military Institute and Peng Kang Hill, and the next day I was at Sepoy Lines for my medical school orientation! Five years flew by, and my sister Deirdre and I graduated in 1986.

### Housemanship at SGH

My class was hit badly when one-third of the cohort was failed in general surgery by a certain eminent surgeon (who shall not be named). As a result, we started with a severe manpower shortage as house officers (HOs). I recall doing my SGH general surgery posting with only one other HO. We did not go home that posting, doing every-other-day calls and sleeping in the Houseman quarters as we struggled to each complete the stack of 40 to 50 discharge summaries!

One night, at surgery A unit, I was the only HO covering all the surgical wards and paediatrics surgery. That night, the







operator erroneously paged my father to come to Ward 55 to give IVs. The ward nurses had asked to page “Dr Murugasu”; he looked up his rolodex and promptly called JJ Murugasu to come to SGH! Well, you can imagine what happened next; my father promptly called me and yelled: “Get off your butt and go to the ward!” Such tender words indeed!

## Specialisation

After completing my National Service (NS), my cohort was the first hit by the restructuring exercise in the late 1980s. Overnight, we were told that we would be employed by SGH or National University Hospital instead of the Ministry of Health! I joined SGH as a general surgery trainee in 1989. After a while, I realised that general surgery was no longer the same as when I was a medical student. Rapid subspecialisation had forever changed the landscape of general surgery.

I had the good fortune of doing a short three-month NS posting to Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s ENT department, and I thoroughly enjoyed the scopes and technologies that were fast emerging in ENT at the time. We had just started using nasal endoscopes to examine patients and there were huge advances in hearing-assistive technologies such as cochlear implants coming into clinical practice.

After one posting in general surgery, I made the switch to ENT. I never asked my general surgeon father if he approved of the switch, but suffice to say, he supported my decision and allowed me to then push off to the UK for my postgraduate training from 1990 to 1996. I completed my Fellowship of the Royal

Colleges of Surgeons in Edinburgh and London in 1992. I went on to pursue a PhD programme in Auditory Physiology at the University of Sussex under the UK Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom Overseas Research Scholarship Award and the Lee Kuan Yew Scholarship in 1997. Looking back, it was a masochistic exercise, as I was also working **full time** in the National Health Service as a specialist registrar with hospital duties and a “one in three” on-call roster, and yet also spending all my evenings and weekends in the laboratory on my research work. My chocolate Labrador, Max, kept me sane and grounded as I had to walk him twice a day.

Through those six years, my parents were my pillars of support. Even though my parents never liked travelling, my mother made a special visit to stay with me for six weeks with Mrs Wong Hock Boon in the summer of 1994. I benefited greatly from a steady stream of home-cooked food!

## Conclusion

When I look back at the past 30-odd years, I am grateful for the insight my parents gave me into their lives as doctors; in essence, they had **no** work-life balance. Back then, they seemed to live in and around the hospitals and wards (literally) and as children, we would crave their attention and guard jealously whatever time they could spare for us outside work.

Today, my own life as a parent is vastly different and I am much more involved (the kids would say too much!) in the lives of my three children. Even so, I think

we should all strive for a healthy work-family life balance in this crazy, frenzied world, where our family provides us with a bedrock of love and affirmation. ♦

## Reference

1. *The Straits Times*. Doctor in the house? There’re five in the Murugasu family. *The Straits Times*. 7 September 1986, Home news, page 11.


## Legend

1. Recent Lunar New Year family photo in the garden at my parents’ home; they are both in their 90s now
2. Dr JJ Murugasu and Dr Ng Chiau Gian as medical students (Class of 1947) looking for mosquito larvae during their posting – note the cap and crest
3. NUS Medical Faculty final year SGH posting with classmates. Can you recognise who’s who? One of us now runs Parkway Pantai IHH group of hospitals
4. 1986 MBBS graduation for Euan and Deirdre with our parents
5. FRCS England convocation ceremony (1992) with Sir Prof (Dr) Norman Browse at Lincoln’s Inn Fields; he inspired many surgeons

Dr Euan is an ENT Surgeon in private practice. Previously, he enjoyed working as an ENT Consultant in NUH, SGH and TTSH, and as Head of ENT at NTFGH, which opened in 2015. His interests include scuba diving, Chinese calligraphy and brush painting, jazz and classical piano, orchid horticulture, art and gastronomy. He is happily married to a non-doctor with three grown up children, none of whom have decided to pursue medicine.







# Like a Parent's Love

Text by Dr Tan Yia Swam

SMA News has published several issues where medical families were featured – whether they are multi-generational, siblings, or husband and wife. It can sometimes be quite funny when you get to know the doctors in separate settings, and yet it has somehow never crossed your mind that they are related. It is hence surprising when you find out your colleague has a twin. No wonder he/she sometimes does not greet or acknowledge you – that was the twin who does not know you!

## Purpose, joy and meaning

It is really heartening to read about such stories, especially when I also hear of friends who regret taking up medicine or friends who hope that their children will not have to walk the same hard path they did.

It is a calling to enter medicine, I suppose. There will be good times and there will be bad. One has to find one's own balance and figure out what is "enough" to persevere on. Whether it is the appreciation from patients and their families, peers and colleagues, or just the quiet satisfaction of a job well done. Appropriate financial remuneration

helps for sure! Some of my friends are grumbling about pay cuts, and they feel disgruntled when they read news of pay raises for others. Money is always a sensitive (and sore) topic. I figured that it is better to close one eye and shut the other; if there is enough to get by day-to-day, that is enough of a blessing.

Working for a greater purpose gives me a more sustainable reason than just money. Helping someone who needs it and appreciates it is so much more meaningful than rendering a service for payment and being taken for granted. This seems to hold true for every job. It is the small little human touches that bring our lives joy and meaning.

Often, chit-chatting with the hawker, Grab driver, deliveryman or bus driver can bring a twinkle to their eyes. Each and every person is more than just their job. They have their own personalities, and their own needs and wants as well. It is not about being nice, it is a very simple basic human need and a simple common courtesy. If you have not done so before, give it a try!

Remember how we were taught to take a social history in medical school? I think many of us as students focused

on the patients' smoking and alcohol drinking as disease risks. Later, when working, we used their social history to understand their family care structure in order to conduct discharge planning. Then as consultants, we finally have the luxury of time to chit-chat with our patients and take a real social history, and it is amazing what we can learn from our patients in turn. In fact, this can be done by anyone running their own practice and manages to structure the appointments such that there is ample **time** to build up a relationship.

We pick up the bits and pieces of information on the fields our patients are in, their passion, or their life journeys. We learn about their early childhood education, or how a stay-home mother of five home-schools her kids; we learn intimately about their hobbies, like making home-brewed craft beer or being an avid HDB gardener, and their occupations such as being a veterinary assistant, a competitive surferboarder, etc. We even learn about those who are survivors of spousal abuse and those who are overcoming the untimely loss of a child to illness or to suicide.



## At the heart of it all

I ponder on the doctor-patient relationship a lot and on what is special about the relationship. It is not just the professionalism or the mismatch in knowledge, or even the power that doctors hold over patients. This might have been true decades ago, but the pendulum of the power equilibrium has shifted so much.

Doctors (and many other healthcare providers) feel like we have been denigrated to being mere “service providers”. For those of you in administration, with your hand on your heart, can you deny this? We are held hostage to the sway of public (and social media) opinions. Our knowledge is constantly challenged by Google. 20 minutes of Google research is used to challenge and poke holes in our 20 years of studies and clinical experience. Hot and trending videos and viral content based on half-myths and quack science cause some patients to mistrust healthcare providers to **their** own detriment. When

the complaint to the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) comes, doctors face the punishment, while the writers of poorly written search-engine optimised articles are rarely held accountable.

Insurance companies lay down various payment guidelines which sometimes hinder the provision of medical services (I **do not** mean this as an accusation, I state this as an observed fact). I have done what I can to best represent doctors and patients in the Multilateral Healthcare Insurance Committee, in order to bring some fairness to **all**. I sincerely hope that more doctors and insurers will join in the conversation to better understand the system’s gaps and loopholes, and put patients’ needs first. As I have always said, we will **all** be patients someday.

So what is the doctor-patient relationship? It is trust, mutual respect and love – love in an all-encompassing sense.

There is a Chinese phrase, “医者父母心”, which may be loosely translated as

the heart of a physician being like those of parents, referring to the way we care for patients: to have no biases, but to love all our children (patients) equally.

If the patient I see in front of me were my own mother, how would I treat her? Would I order her around? Would I lay down all the options and let her decide on her own, without caring if she made a bad decision? Would I hide the truth from her and do what I think was best? Would I do everything possible to keep her alive even if it was likely to be futile? Would I protect her dignity and respect her choice? Would I stand by her through thick and thin?

Even as there seem to be tighter and stricter laws governing the practice of medicine, I tell myself that it is for the greater good. And I will not allow myself to become jaded. Even though there are increasing financial pressures across all sectors, I must not become a pure businessman.

I hold myself to the oath I made. ♦

## The SMC Physician’s Pledge

*I solemnly pledge to: dedicate my life to the service of humanity; give due respect and gratitude to my teachers; practise my profession with conscience and dignity; make the health of my patient my first consideration; respect the secrets which are confided in me; uphold the honour and noble traditions of the medical profession; respect my colleagues as my professional brothers and sisters; not allow the considerations of race, religion, nationality or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient; maintain due respect for human life; use my medical knowledge in accordance with the laws of humanity; comply with the provisions of the Ethical Code; and constantly strive to add to my knowledge and skill. I make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour.*

Dr Tan is a mother to three kids, wife to a surgeon; a daughter and a daughter in-law. She trained as a general surgeon, and entered private practice in mid-2019, focusing on breast surgery. She treasures her friends and wishes to have more time for her diverse interests: cooking, eating, music, drawing, writing, photography and comedy.



# HIGHLIGHTS

## From the Honorary Secretary

Report by Dr Ng Chew Lip

Dr Ng is an ENT consultant in public service. After a day of doctoring and cajoling the kids at home to finish their food, his idea of relaxation is watching a drama serial with his lovely wife and occasionally throwing some paint on a canvas.



### Compulsory medical ethics CME from 2024

We wish to alert members to changes in the continuing medical education (CME) requirements beginning from 2024. Doctors with CME Qualifying Period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025 (two-year practising certificates [PCs]) need to begin accumulating medical ethics core points from 1 January 2024, while doctors with CME Qualifying Period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025 (one-year PCs) need to do so from 1 January 2025 onwards. For more details, please refer to the Singapore Medical Council's announcement: <https://bit.ly/3wzowhe>.

SMA has already developed online modules that qualify for medical ethics core CME points. New content will continue to be added as we approach the start date in 2024. For more details, please refer to our list of CME programmes: <https://www.sma.org.sg/cme-programme>.

In addition, SMA's Centre of Medical Ethics and Professionalism continues to run in-person courses that also fulfil the CME requirement. Please refer to our calendar of events at <https://smacmep.org.sg/events-calendar>.

### Vision Zero pledge on Workplace Safety and Health

SMA recently signed up to a pledge, organised by the Workplace Safety and Health Council (WSHC). The pledge is reproduced below.

We care for the Well-being, Safety and Health of our healthcare workers.

Through our commitment to Care, we believe that zero harm to our staff and stakeholders is possible and that all healthcare workplace-related injuries and ill-health are preventable.

We are committed to:

- Encouraging our members and stakeholders to embark on the Vision Zero journey and promulgating WSH programmes and initiatives so as to raise workplace safety and health performance and outcomes collectively; and
- Playing an active role to improve the workplace safety and health standards and practices of healthcare industry and fostering a culture of care and prevention for our stakeholders.

SMA encourages all Members to adopt processes to improve safety and health at their workplaces.

WSHC programmes and resources are available at the following links:

- <https://bit.ly/3WJvwCC>
- <https://bit.ly/3WWlAi5>  
Scroll down the webpage to the "By industry" filter and select the "Healthcare" checkbox to show the resources for the healthcare industry. ♦



# Health Sector Recovery After Pandemic

## 19th MASEAN — CONFERENCE —

Text by Denise Tan, Deputy Manager, International Relations  
Photos by Indonesian Medical Association

The 19th Medical Association of South East Asian Nations (MASEAN) Conference was held from 3 to 4 December 2022 at Hotel Borobudur Jakarta in Indonesia. This year's meeting was hosted by the Indonesian Medical Association (IMA) and attended by delegates from the national medical associations (NMAs) of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The event was graced by the Indonesian Minister of Health, Mr Budi G Sadikin, who took the opportunity to share the plans and challenges facing the Indonesian healthcare system.

The SMA delegation comprised Dr Ng Chew Lip (Honorary Secretary, SMA and Secretary General, MASEAN), Dr Tan Yia Swam (President, SMA), Dr Ng Chee Kwan (1st Vice President, SMA) and the SMA secretariat team.

The theme for this year's Scientific Symposium was "Health Sector Recovery after Pandemic". The NMAs' representatives shared their respective experiences and roles during the pandemic, their medical manpower arrangements and regulations, how each country planned to emerge stronger,

and their thoughts on the future of healthcare tourism.

Aside from the countries' reports, delegates also discussed other issues that concern the NMAs and the healthcare profession, such as membership matters, telemedicine and healthcare tourism, and women doctors. Dr Tan Yia Swam highlighted that the mindset that women doctors will stop working to stay home and look after their children should change. She added that there should be more women leaders to lead by example, and to mentor and guide other women colleagues. They should also be supported through workplace empowerment (eg, by providing nursing rooms for mothers).

Another issue which delegates felt strongly about was the bullying and discrimination of healthcare workers. A suggestion to draft a position statement on this issue and to adopt it at the 2023 MASEAN Mid-Term Meeting was raised. The theme for the upcoming meeting will be on telemedicine.

With these thoughts in mind, the delegates bade farewell as the MASEAN Conference concluded.

We thank the IMA for their warm hospitality and look forward to the 19th MASEAN Mid-Term Conference, to be hosted by SMA in Singapore in July 2023. ♦

### Medical Association of South East Asian Nations

MASEAN was formed on 10 April 1980 in Penang, Malaysia, in recognition of the importance of mutual cooperation and collective efforts among the NMAs in attaining the highest possible level of healthcare for people in the region, and in upholding the image and dignity of the medical profession. Subsequently on 30 January 1981, MASEAN was accepted by ASEAN as an affiliate with non-governmental status.

The main objectives of MASEAN are:

- To promote close ties among the NMAs and physicians in ASEAN;
- To foster the study and dissemination of all aspects of medical knowledge;
- To study and report on the problems which confront the profession in the region; and
- To establish common policies in attaining the highest possible level of healthcare for the people.

Member associations take turns to organise the meetings in their respective countries. SMA currently hosts the MASEAN Secretariat and works closely with member associations to organise these events.



Delegates posing for a group photo at the 19th MASEAN Conference



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Help us keep you connected. If you have moved, changed email or mailing addresses, let us know! By keeping your information current, you will receive important updates and other useful information from SMA. Also, you won't miss out on giveaways for Members!



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## Membership Details Update Lucky Draw

**Congratulations!**

We are pleased to announce the 20 winners who have updated their information during the campaign period.

**Winners will be notified via email**

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**Campaign Period: September 2022 to September 2023**

- SMA Members who update their contact information during the campaign period are eligible for the lucky draw (regardless of the quarter).
- Lucky draw winners will be selected at random, and not on a first come, first served basis.
- Winners will be announced once every quarter during the campaign period via the SMA website, SMA News and our Facebook group.



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# A Night in Appreciation

Text by Benjamin Ong, Editorial Executive

On 2 February 2023, the SMA Publications department hosted a combined appreciation dinner for both the *SMA News* and *Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ)* editorial boards at Novotel Singapore on Stevens. Attended as well by SMA President Dr Tan Yia Swam and SMA Vice-President Dr Ng Chee Kwan, the appreciation dinner was our editorial boards' first in-person gathering since the outbreak of the pandemic. In fact, for many on the editorial boards, this was their first time meeting each other face to face!

We dug into a hearty eight-course feast, supplemented by fine wines brought by the board members



SMA News Editor (third from left, seated), guests and staff before the lo-hei

themselves. Dr Tan Yia Swam, *SMJ* Editor Adj Prof Poh Kian Keong, *SMA News* Editor Dr Tina Tan each shared their heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the hard work put in by both board's members. It being the 12th day of the Lunar New Year, each table also engaged in the Chinese festive ritual of tossing *yusheng* (raw fish salad) and wishing each other blessings for the year ahead.

Indeed, these past years have been tumultuous for both *SMA News* and *SMJ*. After all, it is no small feat to manage the workload of a doctor and that of an editorial board member at the same time. Several members of the editorial boards were instated during the pandemic, adapting to their new responsibilities as they struggled with the trials of COVID-19. *SMJ* in particular has recently undergone many structural changes, including going paperless and engaging Wolters Kluwer Medknow as the journal's publisher. We thank the editorial board members of both publications for their hard work, time and dedication.



Dr Tan Yia Swam delivering her opening speech

The atmosphere at the dinner was so convivial and relaxed that many chattered away like old friends. Board members shared stories and little anecdotes of their lives, laughing at the amusing tales and commiserating with each other's experiences. Our dinner guests mingled freely and happily between *SMA News* and *SMJ*, truly epitomising the unity of the SMA family.

As the hour grew late, our board members began to take their leave. Though we wished that our time together could have lasted longer, work still awaited us all the next day. The editorial board members bade each other farewell with joyous camaraderie in their hearts. We look forward to many more meetings, and may each be sweeter than the last! ♦



SMJ Editor (third from left, seated), board members and staff at dinner

# My Father, My Inspiration

## Interview with Prof Phua Ghee Chee



*In this issue where we hear from families in medicine, a father-and-son duo not to be missed is Prof Phua Ghee Chee, Deputy CEO of Singapore General Hospital (SGH), and his father, renowned clinician Prof Phua Kong Boo, paediatric gastroenterologist, emeritus consultant in KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and recipient of the 2020 SMA Honorary Membership. Both father and son have attained great heights in the practice of medicine, with Prof Phua Kong Boo even having an illness named after him – the PKB Syndrome.*

*In this interview, SMA News hears from Prof Phua Ghee Chee about his experience growing up as a doctor's son, and what it is like to follow in his father's footsteps.*

### **Tell us more about your father, Prof Phua Kong Boo, and yourself.**

My father is a professor of paediatrics who has been in public service for more than 50 years. He is a well-respected clinician, researcher and educator. He has garnered many awards and accolades over the years, including Master Academic Clinician, Emeritus Consultant, Distinguished Mentor, Service Superstar Awards and more. He continues to maintain a busy clinical practice in KKH today.

I am a respiratory and ICU physician at SGH, where I have worked for the past two decades. I was the former Programme Director of the SingHealth Internal Medicine Residency Programme, and I led the Department of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine from 2017 to 2022. During the COVID-19 pandemic,

I led the SGH and SingHealth ICU Committee. Currently, I serve as the deputy CEO of SGH, and the Chief Wellness Officer at SingHealth.

### **Going into medicine**

#### **When and why did you first decide that you wished to be a doctor?**

Since I was a child, my father frequently took me to the SGH Campus. I recall doing homework in his office in Bowyer Block while he was on his weekend ward rounds. I played squash in the indoor court behind today's Level 9 staff lounge, ate chicken rice at the old house officer's canteen (which is the site of today's Academia building), and played tennis at the court where today's container isolation ward stands. Having been exposed to his workplace from a young age, it seemed natural for me

to be a doctor and I did not seriously entertain any other career. However, I only decided on the path and applied to medical school after getting my A Level results, as I was not sure that my results would qualify for medical school.

#### **What was the most challenging part of being a doctor's son?**

My father worked long hours, and on most weekends and public holidays for as long as I could remember. Still, because he frequently took me to his workplace and made time for me, I never felt that he was unavailable.

#### **What did you admire most about your father, as a doctor?**

He is completely dedicated to his patients and absolutely devoted to his craft. Even today, I see him reading books and journals about his specialty



every day. He has always remained humble and approachable, and I try to model myself after him every day.

**Did your father encourage/support your pursuit of and career in medicine? Did his choice of specialty influence your own?**

At no time in my growing up did he tell me that he wanted me to be a doctor. He always encouraged me to make my own decision. Nevertheless, the memories of him working so hard in the hospital and being so dedicated to his patients inspired me and led me to believe that the medical profession was a career where I could similarly find meaning and my calling in.

As a paediatrician, he specialised in gastroenterology and hepatology. Even though I liked paediatrics, internal medicine was always my first choice

and I decided to do my postgraduate training in internal medicine, followed by respiratory and intensive care medicine.

**A family in medicine**

**Has your shared experience in healthcare with your father brought you closer together?**

Absolutely! We talk about our clinical and non-clinical work. I have learnt a lot from his experiences and his wisdom. A precious opportunity I was very grateful for was him bringing me along sometimes for his clinics and rounds when I was a medical student. I certainly benefited clinically from this as well.

**How have your other family members supported both of you on the medical journey?**

Both my mother and my wife (who is a family physician) have been most

supportive of our careers, which frequently takes us away from our families. We are most grateful to them.

**Do your children wish to pursue medicine as well?**

My daughter is currently a third-year medical student in Singapore, and my son, who is currently serving National Service, is hoping to get into medical school. Both of them were heavily influenced and inspired by their grandfather and, hopefully, a little by me. ♦

**Legend**

1. Prof Phua Kong Boo (second from left) with family, attending a dinner in his honour hosted by KK Women and Children Hospital

2. Dr Phua Ghee Chee with his family (including Miso, their beloved dog)



# The Stories of Siblings



*Have you ever wondered what it might be like to pursue a medical career with not just your friends as peers and colleagues, but your siblings as well? Below, Dr Ng Chee Kwan and Dr Lim Ing Haan share their respective experiences and fond memories of studying and practising medicine together with their siblings.*

Text by Dr Ng Chee Kwan

You could say that I come from a family of doctors. It all started with my father who is a family physician. I think my decision to study medicine came from observing my father at work and knowing that his patients really appreciated him, and that he was an important part of the community that he served. When the time came for me to decide, it was an easy choice for me to study medicine.

As the eldest of three siblings, and being a somewhat unadventurous person, I decided to study medicine in Singapore, despite being given the opportunity for overseas study. My sister and brother had their late secondary and pre-university education overseas (perhaps my parents made them do it), and so it was natural for them to continue with their medical studies abroad.

It was nice to know that all of us were following in our father's footsteps. There was no sense of competition among us since we were all in different cohorts and personally, I was too busy trying to

stay afloat among the deluge of tests and examinations to try and compete with my siblings.

I do admire that my siblings had an overseas education and the opportunity to enjoy living in a different country, and I also admire their accomplishments. My sister, who works in the pharmaceutical industry, often has opportunities for overseas assignments and travels all over the world. My brother has also done very well for himself as a surgeon, and I enjoy the occasional times when we work together during surgery.

I believe most siblings in medicine end up in different roles so as not to overlap, though I do know of siblings pursuing the same specialty and it seems to work out well too. I find it a blessing to have siblings in medicine as we can consult with each other, and we know that we have each other's back.

My brother and I work in the same hospital, with both our clinics on the same floor. The occasional downside to having a sibling in medicine is that my

patient may turn up at his clinic, and vice versa, since the first two syllables of our names are the same. I have also come to accept that the hospital nurses will sometimes make phone calls to me by mistake when they are actually looking for my brother. All in all, I think that's a small price to pay for having siblings in medicine.

Ng Chee Kwan is a urologist in private practice and current 1st Vice-President of the SMA. He has two teenage sons whom he hopes will grow much taller than him. He has probably collected too many watches for his own good.





Text and photos by Dr Lim Ing Haan

Ing Ruen and I are from a small nuclear family. We grew up around the slogan “Girl or Boy, Two is enough” and the classic image of two girls sheltered under an umbrella sharing an apple never failed to give me a sense of pride. We could not have known that in those days, boys were favoured over girls.

In our family, education was the most important. My maternal grandmother, then a teacher at Chung Cheng High School, rushed to get a letter of recommendation from the Catholic Church for us to be accepted to Canossa Convent Primary School when we were barely one year old. My dad, then a teacher at Catholic High, preferred St Nicholas Girls’ School. He tried to get a letter from the Catholic High School principal, Brother Joseph Dufresse Chang, who declared that at our age of one, my father’s demands were too premature. Even in those days, our parents were hilariously desperate in the primary school registration exercise. I can remember clearly that at the primary school registration, our parents submitted a letter requesting that Ing Ruen and I be admitted to Primary School as one student. Such was the gravity of the situation – their desire that we remain together in the school of their choice.

Fast forward through the years, we were always in the same class even as we entered Singapore Chinese Girls’ School and Hwa Chong Junior College. Our grades were almost always identical and in a meritocratic system, that meant we were always banded together in the same class, much to the dismay of our teachers. We both made the decision to follow in the footsteps of the many generations of doctors on Mum’s side. It was our dream to become doctors. Our parents encouraged us to apply for an international scholarship as a safety net because our parents could only afford a local medical education for both of us. The Public Service Commission (PSC) provided us with scholarships to attend any Ivy League school in the US or any

university in the UK in any discipline of our choice, and we were both accepted at several schools. Despite PSC repeatedly urging us to accept their offer, local medical school admission results were not expected until April. In the end, we forfeited our PSC scholarships because the ones available were not for medical studies.

We were desperate to get into the NUS Faculty of Medicine, and were thankfully both accepted. I once ran into the Dean of Medicine along the long corridors of the National University Hospital. He realised that the twins had been accepted and exclaimed that it was impossible! With only one local medical school, an intake of only 145 students in 1990 and a one-third female admission quota, the odds for simultaneous admission of twins may have seemed insurmountable, but they were not. We are eternally grateful for the opportunity to study medicine.

As expected, only half of our classmates and friends could tell us apart. To pre-empt embarrassing friends or alienating colleagues, we decided that it was prudent to get to know each other’s friends and colleagues well. In fact, to reduce confusion, the Ministry of Health even wrote to tell us that we should not be in the same department for our house officer and medical officer (MO) postings. They did however, grant our requests for the earlier postings to be in the same hospital for logistical reasons because we shared a car.

We finally got tired of seeing each other every day and made a deal: one would be a surgeon and the other a physician. Ing Ruen decided to become an ENT surgeon and swiftly passed

her examinations in the first MO year, followed by her Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons. I began my training in internal medicine, which led to a position in cardiology.

Having a twin sibling in medicine for us is really fun. We get to compare our milestones at every stage. We are galvanised and motivated by each other because we are genetically the same. We are energised by each other’s accomplishments and stunned by each other’s failures. But because of the knowledge that there are two of us, we do not get discouraged or disheartened easily. There is always a sister behind each of us to offer comfort. So perhaps it is not unexpected that both of us now share a clinic in Mount Elizabeth Hospital. ♦

#### Legend

1. My mom, Chang Lu Yee, is always brilliant and witty. My dad, Lim Hong Quee, once Discipline Master at Catholic High Secondary School, is well loved by generations of students

2. From left: Dr Chng Nai Wee, Dr Lim Ing Ruen, Dr Lim Ing Haan and Dr Gregory Leong at the Eagle Eye Gala Dinner in 2016

Dr Lim is the first female interventional cardiologist in Singapore. She is an early adopter of new technology and is a key opinion leader in international cardiology conferences. She shares a clinic with her twin, Dr Lim Ing Ruen, an ENT surgeon in Mount Elizabeth Hospital. Both believe in the power of food, travel, laughter and loyalty in forming strong family bonding.





# Notes from a *Slightly Bigger Island*

*Singapore is a small country, even if some inspired travel writers would say that the British Isles are also rather small. Now approaching the midway point of the academic year, we invited our Singapore Medical Society of the United Kingdom student members to share their experiences navigating these Albion islands. This letter is the first in a two-part series exploring daily life in a foreign city.*

*- Gabriel Kwok,  
28th Editor, SMSUK*



*Wildon with some friends over for a home-cooked meal!*

Text and photo by Tan Wei Loong Wildon

*"There is no place like home."*

Having grown up in Singapore, I have long taken what we have for granted: an efficient transport system, good food and, more importantly, friends and family. Clearly, I am a patriot (I proudly back the Singaporean National Football Team) and wholeheartedly love Singapore. However, with an offer from the University of Bristol to work towards, I dare say, the best job in the world, I packed my bags and moved to a different city.

Looking back, my first year abroad was a tough one, filled with a lot of tears and calls back home. Not knowing how to cook, never having truly lived alone with five other strangers, not being able to call "Mum!" when the chicken was not properly cooked – all these were really scary (although that was quickly combatted by FaceTime, and my mother got to see all my cooking failures first!). Homesickness got the better of me and it felt like an unsurmountable challenge set up for failure. But I reminded myself of what a friend from church had encouraged me to read before I left – Psalms 121 – and I continue to take comfort in that. Gradually, I learnt how to enjoy the imperfections of things around

me, and how to be flexible with them. I was also recently introduced to the concept of the "Circle of Influence", which encourages us to focus on what we can control and not waste energy worrying about the things that we cannot. Easier said than done, I know, but I have learnt that worrying does not make the situation any better. What I can do is make the best out of what I am given, and this has made me more mature in the way I approach every situation now.

I have been coming back to this piece multiple times, as I tried to find a conclusion to it. This time, I have come back to it feeling absolutely heartbroken, having just watched England lose to France in the World Cup. But I realised that I am only feeling this way because I have been made to feel very welcomed here and have become part of a community. I have experienced both the highs and lows in football, from watching the Bristol Rovers win 7-0 on the final day of the league to clinch a promotion spot, to witnessing England getting knocked out despite playing very well, and we can draw the same parallels to life. We have our good and bad moments, hopefully more

good than bad. We celebrate the good moments and learn to get past the bad; and honestly, the bad moments make the good ones even sweeter.

I wake up every day thankful for having been given this opportunity to study overseas. I had been living in my own little bubble in Singapore, and this experience has allowed me to open and broaden my perspective. My ideas and beliefs are challenged constantly, making me sure in what I stand for and what I oppose. More importantly, I want to use this opportunity to thank the many supportive friends and family that stuck by me in this journey – be it the Singaporean friends who cheered me on despite being 11,000 km away, or the new ones I made here that I know will stick for life.

Wildon is a second-year medical student at the University of Bristol.





Text by Ryan Chen

We associate “home” with familiarity and comfort, a sense of reassurance, security and ease. The opposite can be said of the term “foreign”, where we expect to face the unknown and deal with the unfamiliar. This forces one to be adaptable and open, to embrace the winds of change and how they shape one differently. Even at the halfway mark of my degree, in my third year of university in the same city, I must confess that much of what I thought I had long accepted as “home” for the coming years still greets me as “foreign”. This time, the transition from the pre-clinical to clinical phase of medical school was the main highlight of my year, and it made me feel like a stranger once again.

The past two years have taught me much about living abroad. Independence and self-sufficiency were key, as I soon found myself taking charge of more aspects of my life. In the blink of an eye, grocery runs, cooking sessions and laundry time became part and parcel of a week’s work, all while juggling my lectures, tutorials and extra-curricular activities. Very soon, the pace of medical school teaching started to intensify, and I found myself drowning in a massive backlog of Panopto lectures.<sup>a</sup> As Christmas approached, inches of

valuable daylight slowly vanished, plunging everything into darkness at a mere four o’clock. It was not long before I started missing home – its familiarity, its fondness and, most importantly, its sense of belonging.

It took a while for me to get used to the hurly-burly of medical school and the challenges posed by living abroad. But I began to appreciate them, embracing how they taught me countless priceless lessons. Responsibility, resourcefulness, and resilience were recurring themes. As I gained more confidence, I began to venture out. I have always wanted to travel, so I started by visiting various cities across the UK – Cambridge, Oxford, London and Edinburgh, to name a few. Eventually, I set my sights on exploring the European continent, booking a flurry of Ryanair and EasyJet flights at student-friendly prices to destinations such as Venice, Amsterdam and Copenhagen. In 2022, I travelled solo for the first time and had my first driving trip with friends. It was definitely something to tick off that bucket list!

Clinical year came, and with it, I bade farewell to the city of Leicester for my out-block postings. This year, I would spend 12 weeks in the neighbouring

city of Kettering for my surgery posting, living in on-site hospital accommodation on weekdays. University lectures became a thing of the past, and smaller-scale tutorials led by senior doctors became the norm. The day no longer started with a seat in the lecture theatre at 9 am, but rather began in a small side room in the hospital going through patient lists, preparing to go on ward rounds as part of a medical team. Once again, I felt like a fish out of water, the reset button being pushed, having to adapt to new environments of learning and living. In the clinical years, the looser timetabling inevitably led to a loss of structure and organisation, but it also promoted independence, self-discipline and liberty.

Overall, living in a foreign city has taught me much about myself and the world around me. Only with an open mind and heart can there be much to learn and even more to embrace. ♦

Ryan Chen is a third-year medical student at the University of Leicester.



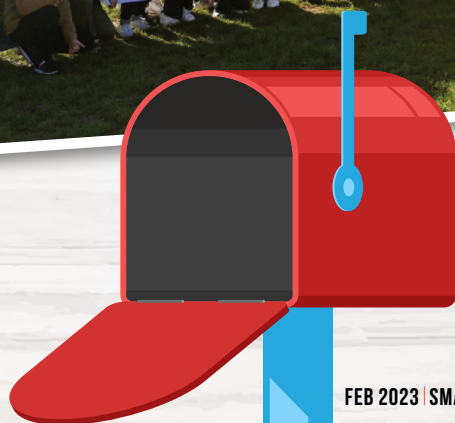
#### Note

a. Panopto is a learning management system used by many universities to stream their lectures online.

#### About SMSUK

The Singapore Medical Society of the United Kingdom (SMSUK) is the representative body for Singaporean medical and dental students across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Since 1994, the society has continually supported and advocated the interests of its members, helping generations of students navigate the transnational healthcare landscape.

SMSUK's recent day trip to Bath and Bristol





Singapore  
Medical  
Association

SMA  
CMEP

Centre for  
Medical Ethics &  
Professionalism



COLLEGE OF PAEDIATRICS AND  
CHILD HEALTH, SINGAPORE



ACADEMY OF MEDICINE  
SINGAPORE



COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
SINGAPORE

# Decision-Making in the Care of Children Who Decides?

Organised by SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism  
in collaboration with the College of Paediatrics and Child Health,  
Academy of Medicine, Singapore and College of Family  
Physicians Singapore

**Date :** 15 April 2023, Saturday

**Time :** 12.30 pm to 4.30 pm

**Venue :** Camden Medical, Level 9 Function Room,  
One Orchard Boulevard, Singapore 248649

**Course Fee :** Complimentary

**CME Points :** 2 CME Points (Pending SMC's Approval)



## Programme Schedule

Time	Topic	Speaker
12.30 pm	Registration/Lunch	
1.50 pm	Introduction	<b>Dr Jonathan Choo</b> <i>Head &amp; Senior Consultant</i> Cardiology Service, KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH)
2 pm	Consent in Children and Adolescents – Who Decides?	<b>Dr Jonathan Choo</b>
2.30 pm	Engaging Children and Adolescents in the Decision-Making Process	<b>Clinical Assoc Prof Chan Mei Yoke</b> <i>Senior Consultant</i> Haematology/Oncology Service, KKH <b>Dr Kumudhini Rajasegaran</b> <i>Senior Consultant</i> Adolescent Medicine Service, KKH
3.10 pm	Case-Based Discussions	<b>Dr Lim Hui Ling</b> <i>Honorary Assistant Secretary</i> College of Family Physicians Singapore <b>All Speakers</b>
3.45 pm	Questions and Answers	
4.15 pm	Closing	<b>Dr Jonathan Choo</b>

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To register, please scan QR code or  
visit <https://bit.ly/3y4Ez7j>. For more  
information, please contact Spencer  
at [cme@sma.org.sg](mailto:cme@sma.org.sg).





# We Are A People

Text by Oviya Ramesh

*We are a people,  
painted from a diverse palette of skins and faiths*

*Wool-knitted hats or hijabs or baseball caps or  
jasmine flowers or yarmulkes  
white Tat Sing slippers with blue straps or  
bare calloused feet or limited-edition Nike  
Air Jordans  
handcuffs or cufflinks adorning wrists*

*Beneath layers of grime or gold  
who are we  
but anthologies  
of people whom we've met  
kept alive by the urge to take the next  
breath  
diagnosed with the human condition*

*We are joined in  
the euphoria of rhythms and movement  
of ourselves  
the thrill of running to find shelter when rain  
hits our heads  
the transfer of fear, excitement, and courage  
through gripped hands  
the liquid love in a mother's lullaby  
the solidarity in rejoicing for someone else*

*Then why is one worth any more than another?  
why does one serve while another is served?  
why are some blatantly disrespected for choices  
they could not make?*

*Some of us have won the lottery of life:  
a family that stands by us  
a reliable source of food and water  
a well-rounded education  
a home to wake up where we fell asleep  
what about those who don't qualify for the game?*

*Let us empathise over our shared experiences  
and recognise our unique differences  
let us remember not to place others below ourselves  
as it is pure luck that our consciousness exists  
within us  
let us empower them to lift up their communities  
using the great privileges we've been so  
fortunate to receive*

*Let us link arms  
and pull one another through the finishing line  
for simply,  
we are a people*

Oviya is a Year 3 medical student at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. When she's not plucking her guitar strings, she can be found engrossed in a book, best accompanied by a hearty cup of genmaicha.



# Travelling Again in 2022

Text and photos by Dr Jimmy Teo, Editorial Board member



The COVID-19 pandemic halted overseas travels for both work and leisure between 2020 and most of 2022. I recall a meeting scheduled for February 2020 with a hypertension workgroup in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia which was cancelled at the last moment, and I requested from Singapore Airlines a refund of the air tickets which was thankfully granted.

Time flew by quickly for most doctors and healthcare staff during the pandemic as we attended to numerous meetings and increased clinical services, while pivoting many clinical, business and research activities to online formats. After the borders between Singapore and Malaysia reopened on 1 April 2022, I was asked to attend a meeting in Penang discussing the management of patients with cardiorenal and metabolic disease.

## Starting nearby

In May 2022, I downloaded my electronic vaccination certificate and submitted it to the Malaysian app "MySehjahtera", though by then check-ins using the app were not officially required. As the travel industry had just restarted in earnest, I received my flight ticket only the day before I was due to fly! Singapore Changi Airport was still quiet with many areas under renovation. Surprisingly, clearing Malaysian immigration control was straightforward.

I was put up at the conference hotel and almost everyone was masked up and observed hand hygiene. One of the highlights of this trip included taking a trishaw to a dinner meeting at a Peranakan restaurant, Richard Rivealee. I had time to meet a nephrologist friend,

who took me to the famous Siam Road *char kway teow* stall. It took an hour before I got my fried noodles, but it was worth the wait. Penang was still quite quiet near the conference centre, with many shops closed and adorned with banners advertising opening dates and job vacancies. Nonetheless, I managed to get some Penang delicacies like red bean pastries. Overall, things were beginning to go back to business as usual.

In August 2022, I was invited by the Malaysian Society of Nephrology to be an examiner for the specialty examinations. Changi Airport was still quiet, and the airport lounge had just been renovated. The flight was straightforward and clearing immigration at the airport in Kuala Lumpur was fairly quick compared to pre-pandemic times when lines could be quite long. At the end of the gruelling examination day, both candidates and examiners rejoiced, and there was time to enjoy the weekend in the city, including indulging in the dry-type pork ribs *bak kut teh*. By this time, the city was coming to life with more visitors and activities, though traffic was relatively light. Most people still wore face masks and observed safe-distancing measures.

## Travelling further out

In September, I flew to Madrid, Spain via Munich, Germany for a clinical trial investigators' meeting. European countries were mostly reopened to fully vaccinated tourists and there were few requirements save for checking vaccination certificates at the airline counter. The weather was fabulous.





The research coordinator and I enjoyed lunch at a local restaurant and squeezed in a late afternoon visit to the palace, cathedral and market, where we enjoyed champagne with oysters. We wrapped up the evening with a walk in the park and enjoyed a wonderful plate of calamari at a restaurant. It was great to meet other Asian investigators and research coordinators from Taiwan and Japan, as these places were still under some travel restrictions at that time.

Outdoors, many people did not wear face masks, but in cabs and indoors, many service staff wore face masks. Hand hygiene resources and COVID-19 test kits were also widely available for all conference attendees. Due to an air traffic controller strike causing Europe-wide delays, my return flight connection was cancelled. Fortunately, I managed to fly into Frankfurt the next day where the airline sorted me out and helped me return in time for my Monday clinic, much to the relief of my fellow doctors!

In October 2022, I was invited to speak at the International Society of Hypertension meeting in Kyoto, Japan. Even until the last moment, travel plans to Japan were uncertain as there were still many restrictions in place. In fact, I had to apply for a visa via a travel agent for entry, upload my itinerary and vaccination certificate, and download the MySOS app. The day I arrived however, Japan had fully reopened, and I cleared immigration with smooth Japanese efficiency, allowing me time to take the Haruka express train to Kyoto from Osaka's Kansai International Airport. I enjoyed the meeting very much, as well as the hospitality of the

Japanese Society of Hypertension. Kudos to Professor Kiroshi Ito and his team for overcoming the challenge of organising this meeting under constantly changing travel rules! At Kansai International Airport, the airport lounge was under renovation when I left, and the airline provided vouchers for the newly opened food court where I enjoyed ramen, gyoza and Japanese beer.

In November 2022, the Kidney Week organised by the American Society of Nephrology was officially an in-person meeting (with hybrid option) and I flew to Orlando, USA via Dubai, UAE. This was the first time I flew to the US via a Middle East stop to avoid a stopover Stateside, as I had read about inadequate manpower and travel facilities causing missed flights and unusual delays.

2022 had been an important year for my school-going children, and we decided to make more memories by going overseas. By December 2022, it was almost business as usual for most places in Asia, including China. In early December, we flew into Danang, Vietnam, and travelled by road to Hue, the former imperial city. After a day of exploring the imperial citadel and tombs, we left for the ancient town of Hoi An, and ended our trip in Danang. We rounded off the year by a trip to Hua Hin and Bangkok, Thailand. I will describe these adventures in subsequent articles.

### How time flies

As I write this article in January 2023, the pandemic is still ongoing, with new variants of COVID-19 popping up. I received the bivalent vaccine in December 2022, and our handling of

COVID-19 is beginning to look like how we manage influenza. The past three years have been extremely challenging in all aspects of work where we learnt new models of care, business and research.

In 2020 and 2021, I had urged my fellow doctors to proportion time properly as pandemic work was likely to be a marathon rather than a sprint. I deferred all research activities and ran outpatient clinics daily with team segregation to provide essential specialty-level services, as staff were redeployed for pandemic-related duties in 2020, standing down by 2021. In 2021, I learnt how to lecture and discuss online, use a green screen, and pre-record lectures in case of connection failures. I am heartened by the technological advances which enabled the speedy development of vaccines, antibody treatments and antiviral medications. There will always be new infectious diseases. What we have learnt from this and past pandemics is that adequate medical resource is required to ensure that excess deaths directly and indirectly caused by new infections is kept low.

As I plan my vacation and other trips in 2023, many places in the world are slowly adapting to business as usual. I am glad to share with you my frontline view of how travel changed in 2022, and I am also surprised that I travelled out of Singapore seven times in 2022! ♦

#### Legend

1. Almudena Cathedral, Madrid, Spain
2. Siam Road, Penang char kway teow
3. Peranakan food from Richard Rivalee
4. Haruka Express train in "Hello Kitty" livery at Kansai International Airport

Dr Teo is an associate professor in the Department of Medicine, NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, and senior consultant in the Division of Nephrology at National University Hospital. He is an active member of the Singapore Society of Nephrology.



# Clinical Care of Persons with Diminished Capacity

Healthcare professionals are often required to assess the mental capacity of their patients to make specific decisions relating to their care and treatment. This assessment is undertaken in a more structured way when it is done for a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) or for court-appointed Deputyship.

This webinar, jointly organised by the SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism and College of Psychiatrists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore, will introduce the basic concepts as well as explore the subtleties of the mental capacity assessments often undertaken at both primary care and specialist settings for vulnerable populations including for end-of-life care and those with dementia or intellectual disability.

Time	Programme
1 pm	<b>Introduction</b> <b>Dr Giles Tan</b> <i>Associate Director, SMA CMEP</i> <i>Senior Consultant, Developmental Psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health (IMH)</i>
1.10 pm	<b>Mental Capacity Assessment in Surgical Procedures</b> <b>Dr Goh Kar Cheng</b> <i>Consultant, Department of Psychological Medicine, National University Hospital</i>
1.40 pm	<b>Mental Capacity Assessment and Dentistry</b> <b>Dr David Lim</b> <i>Special Care Dentist, Tzu Chi Free Clinic</i> <i>Petite Smiles Children's Dental Clinic</i> <i>National Dental Centre Singapore</i> <i>Special Oral Care Network</i>
2.10 pm	<b>Advanced Care Planning in Persons with Diminished Capacity</b> <b>Dr Raymond Ng</b> <i>Senior Consultant and Head, Palliative and Supportive Care,</i> <i>Department of Integrated Care, Woodlands Health Campus</i>
2.40 pm	<b>Challenges in the Issuing and Implementation of LPA: How Social Workers Can Help</b> <b>Ms Chan Lay Lin</b> <i>Principal Medical Social Worker, IMH</i>
3.10 pm	<b>Update on OPGO</b> <b>Ms Regina Chang</b> <i>Public Guardian</i>
3.20 pm	Panel Discussion
4.30 pm	End of Seminar

Organised by:



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Professionalism



6 May 2023, Saturday



1 pm to 4.30 pm

Webinar via Zoom

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