

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.



Many of us decided to take a *wait and see* approach when the Healthier SG initiative was first announced on 9 March 2022. Naturally, there were those who pointed out potential issues with the Government's desire to ensure that everyone in Singapore was enrolled with one family physician. But few could deny that the whole purpose of the initiative – to enhance the health and quality of life of the entire country – is an admirable one, especially given our ageing population and already stretched healthcare system with its itinerant problems.

This issue, *SMA News* wishes to focus on the hopes that doctors on the ground have for Healthier SG. On that note, the aspirations that most (if not, all) of us have for the initiative can be best summed up by Dr Clive Tan in the Feature piece, where he states, "Healthier SG can only work and be sustainable in the long run if it is also Happier SG". Read the full Feature for the expanded context.

On that note, I too, wish all of us a Healthier *and* Happier SG.

DR ALEX WONG

Guest Editor

Dr Wong is a partner in a small group practice and serves in the SingHealth Delivering on Target Primary Care Network as an executive committee member. In his not-so-spare time, he attempts to be a loving husband to his wife and father to his three daughters. He suspects that he sometimes succeeds but will likely have to wait another two decades before he's entirely sure.



It has been said so often that it has almost become a trope: Singapore is an ageing society.

Singapore's estimated elderly demographic proportion is expected to rise from 13.3% in 2010 to 31.9% in 2050. With ageing comes chronic disease. The cost of diabetes management alone is expected to rise from beyond \$940 million in 2014 to \$1.8 billion in 2050.

While still far below comparable Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries, Singapore's healthcare expenditure as a percentage of its gross domestic product continues to escalate annually.

For those of us who practise medicine on the frontline, these are not just numbers on a paper, but a lived experience. Each year brings increasingly crowded A&E departments, more corridor beds, longer

waiting times and sicker patients. We are grateful that the Ministry of Health has come to recognise the necessity of committing resources to preventive care.

The Healthier SG initiative comes close on the coat-tails of the economic destruction caused by COVID-19. We recognise that the Healthier SG plan may not be resourced to be a revolutionary plan but it is certainly a good start.

In this issue, we have invited our primary care, public health and intermediate and long-term care colleagues to come forward and discuss their concerns and aspirations for Healthier SG, and their suggestions on what else might need to be done.

The path forward is fraught with uncertainty and much work remains to be done, but the fact that we are having these conversations gives me hope that our healthcare plan will evolve into something truly worthwhile for our patients. ♦