

Who Heals The Ageing Healer?

Text by Dr Ng Chee Kwan

Most developed countries are facing the challenges of an ageing population. It comes as no surprise that Singapore's population is also ageing rapidly. Speaking at the book launch of *Singapore Ageing: Issues and Challenges Ahead* in April 2023, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong shared the following statistics: "In 2010, about one in ten Singaporeans were aged 65 and above. A decade later, in 2020, it has risen to about one in six. By 2030, another ten years later, it would be almost one in four Singaporeans over 65."¹

The healthcare system will have to cater to the elderly much more in time to come. In this issue, *SMA News* places focus on healthcare efforts in the community, including elderly services in the community.

On a personal note, I do not need any reminder nowadays to know that I am no longer young. My own clinic staff jokingly call me "uncle". My 18-year-old son easily outpaces me without any visible effort when we go running. He entered National Service recently and asked me if I knew any senior commanders, and I told him that I was too old to know any of them. I also have my fair share of age-related health problems, which are

fortunately minor but still cause aches and pains. Although I had heard of the term "root canal" before, I did not know what it really meant until recently, when I had to undergo the procedure myself.

There are some senior colleagues whom I have known for many years, and I am now starting to treat a few of them for their ailments. This brings me to the question: who will look after my health ten, 20 or 30 years down the road? How do we ensure that the younger generation of doctors are well trained?

I remember vividly a statement made by one of my urology mentors when I was still in training. He shared that he willingly passed down all his knowledge and skill in surgery, because he would probably have a prostate problem in the future and would need his ex-student to perform a TURP (transurethral resection of the prostate) on him.

There are many doctors in restructured hospitals and polyclinics involved in the teaching of medical students and residents. Some doctors in private practice also regularly go back to their universities or colleges to teach. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that one of my private practice colleagues had even

published a book on surgery for medical students, and is now embarking on its second edition.

I am deeply appreciative of all the efforts made by doctors who are involved in medical education, and I salute all who step up to teach. ♦

Reference

1. PM Lee Hsien Loong. PM Lee Hsien Loong at the 'Singapore Ageing: Issues and Challenges Ahead' Book Launch. In: Prime Minister's Office Singapore. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3Tw9AwL>. Accessed 11 March 2024.

Dr Ng is a urologist in private practice and current 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.

