

# Remembering Dr Cheong Pak Yean

Text by A/Prof Daniel Fung, Editorial Advisor

Dr Cheong Pak Yean passed away suddenly on 28 March 2025 while vacationing in Japan with his family. He was 75 years old.

I have always called him, simply and affectionately, “Dr Cheong” since we first met in 2000. I do not exactly remember how he came to know of me, but I remember vividly how he encouraged me to write for *SMA News* and to join its Editorial Board – a role I have now held for 25 years.

Over those years, Dr Cheong became more than a mentor to me – he became a friend. He was also our family doctor, looking after our household of five children with care and warmth. My children have all been seen by him, and even my son, who is not usually keen on visiting doctors, enjoyed going to see “Dr Cheong”. When I signed up for Healthier SG in November 2023, I listed him as our family physician. He emailed me in his usual gentle, straightforward manner to explain what it meant. He told me I could just register and leave it at that, since I had already done most of the preventive work, unless I wanted to take advantage of the free screenings.

He was a familiar figure in Singapore, and he worked close to a road named after his grandfather, so we often joked that he could stroll down any street in Singapore as if it were his grandfather’s

road. In the world of primary care, he formed a legendary duo with Dr Goh Lee Gan, with whom he embarked on countless academic “adventures”.

Just recently, I had written to him regarding a special issue of *SMA News* themed around doctors who serve. As the issue’s guest editor, I asked if he could write a 500-word piece on his personal voluntary work, but he responded with a different idea: a dialogue between himself and Dr Goh. We all agreed to his suggestion and were planning to meet for the interview. I was looking forward to hearing his always-thoughtful, witty reflections.

Dr Cheong was prolific, writing in both academic and creative modes, and he often shared his works with me, perhaps finding in me a kindred spirit. His last piece, on the extended consultation, arrived in my mailbox just a day before I flew to Japan for my family’s annual vacation. I told myself I would read it and get back to him.

Alas, that reply will never come, at least not in person.

We hope to publish this final piece in *SMA News*, not only to honour his contributions, but to remember the man, the doctor, the teacher and the legacy he leaves behind.

May you rest in peace, Dr Cheong. ♦



Group photo of A/Prof Cheong at the National Healthcare Group Assembly 2025; the last time A/Prof Fung saw him