
SMA



For Doctors, For Patients

news

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Global Health:
A Path Less Travelled

19 Years in Politics:
**From an
Ophthalmologist**



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Dr Eric Cher
Orthopaedic Surgeon
Service Director (Foot & Ankle Surgery)
Sengkang General Hospital
Duke-NUS Class of 2014



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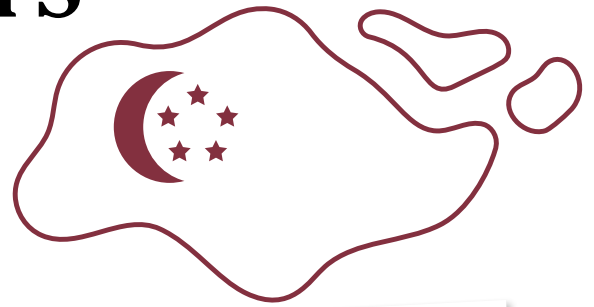
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The Editor's Musings

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.



At the July 2025 Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, USA, Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan (who is no stranger to us in the medical community) participated in a fireside chat and was asked by a journalist whether Singapore was “safe”.

His immediate response?

“History is replete with the carcasses of small states.”

This vivid imagery is a sobering reminder that what we have achieved here in Singapore is not to be taken for granted, especially given how remarkably uncertain this year of 2025 has been from a global lens. The tariff war was a real rollercoaster, was it not? And it is not over yet.

Still, there is no more appropriate time to remember how far our nation has come than this year, as Singapore celebrates a whopping sixty years of independence. If I thought SG50 was marvellous, look at how quickly ten years flew by for us to arrive at SG60.

It also brings to mind this question: “How did our forefathers do it?” How did they traverse the narrow and difficult path of nation building against the odds in those post-colonial, post-war days? If you ask me, the answer is this: passion.

What is passion? It is a strong desire or enthusiasm for something. A fervent belief that provokes conviction, action and change.

It is for this, I believe, that members of our own community might take the “path less travelled” and do things that few of us would be inclined to do outside the usual scope of clinical work, administration, research and education. To that end, and to commemorate this year’s National Day, we extended an invitation to Dr Lim Wee Kiak, who kindly agreed to share his reflections on straddling medicine and politics. On that note, while Dr Lim calls himself an “accidental politician”, he wound up serving our nation as a Member of Parliament for nineteen years, before stepping down earlier this year. Further, we have Dr Hoe Pei Shan’s submission, in which she interviews emergency medicine physician Dr Tiah Ling about her “nomadic life”, where she “hops” from “passion project to passion project” while serving the humanitarian needs of others.

At the risk of sounding like a social studies textbook, Singapore has come a long way since those early years of independence. Our healthcare system has made strides in accordance with the progress that our nation has made. Are there outstanding issues? Undoubtedly. Are we, as a medical community, all in this together? Like it or not, yes.

So, I ask the younger readers among us – what are you passionate about? And to the older readers – what keeps you passionate? ♦



The Influence of a Father

Text by Dr Ng Chee Kwan

It is 15 June 2025, Father's Day, as I pen my thoughts. On this day, I reflect on how my choice of career, how I treat patients and how I ended up doing medical advocacy were unconscious reflections of my father's actions and deeds.

Though my father was a doctor, he has never asked me to take up medicine as a career, and neither did he extol the virtues and advantages of being a doctor. He worked the typical long hours of a solo GP. I remember that he would always take his morning walk before driving to work. Although his clinic was supposed to start at 9 am, he would often arrive only about half an hour later. His patients did not mind waiting for him. Looking back, I suppose he preferred having a queue of patients as he started work. He would then come home for dinner before making his way back to work again for night clinic.

I never questioned why he worked such long hours; it just seemed natural to me. I enjoyed the occasional visits to his clinic, and his staff (who are still working for him after all these years) were always happy to see me. I would potter around the dispensary area and marvel at the drawers of medication and the large plastic bottles of cough mixture. Many of his patients were locals, either living in the neighbourhood or working in the market and food centre located just opposite his

clinic. From the relaxed conversations my father had with them, and the occasional packets of food that they would gift him, I witnessed the bond that he had with his loyal patients.

Many patients would prefer to see him, even for routine consultations, and on the rare occasions when he was on leave, they would wait for him to return rather than see the covering locum doctor. Years later, as a doctor myself, I came to see some of his patients for urinary tract problems, and they told me about what a good doctor he was.

He also served the community through grassroots work at the nearby community centre and provided pro bono medical consultations for a nursing home and a day care centre. He was also actively involved in the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS) as a council member and honorary treasurer. Strangely, he did not tell me much about what he did in CFPS, but other people have shared with me about his work and some of what he accomplished is publicly available on the Internet. All the same, I wandered along the same path and eventually became involved in a professional body as well.

My father is still working, although he has substantially scaled down his working hours. Much like many doctors

who have worked a lifetime taking care of patients, he finds it difficult to retire.

Perhaps I was subconsciously motivated to become a doctor by my father's work ethic and his role in the community. My elder son has since also become interested in a medically related career, although I have tried my best to give him a balanced picture of the prospects and encouraged him to explore other paths. I guess it truly is the influence of a father.

By the time you read this, the occasion will be long over, but nonetheless I would like to wish all fathers reading this a belated Happy Father's Day! ♦

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.



2025

SMA Membership Renewal Congratulations to our **Lucky Winners!**

We are grateful to our Members for your unwavering support of SMA, enabling us to advocate for crucial issues in the medical profession.

We are delighted to announce the seven winners of our SMA Membership renewal lucky draw, each of whom will receive **a luxurious Swiss-made Trofish watch**. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for participating in this campaign and renewing your membership with us.



MCR numbers of winners

M01107Z	M08668A	M15652C
M04479B	M10083H	M68488J
M06131Z		

Winners will receive a random model of Trofish watch, including but not limited to the watch models pictured above.



UPCOMING TALK: SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR DOCTORS

Join us on 19 September 2025 for a complimentary dinner and talk on "Succession Planning for Doctors: Ensuring Business Continuity and Succession in Healthcare"! Stay tuned for more details in your email or contact joanneng@sma.org.sg for more information.

HIGHLIGHTS

From the Honorary Secretary

Report by Clinical Asst
Prof Benny Loo Kai Guo

Dr Loo is a paediatrician in public service with special interest in sport and exercise medicine. He serves to see the smiles on every child and athlete, and he looks forward to the company of his wife and children at the end of every day.



Visit by MMA Wilayah Persekutuan

The Wilayah Persekutuan (Kuala Lumpur) branch of the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) recently organised a cross-border trip to Singapore, led by their Chairperson Dr Selvarajah Sathaya.

The MMA Kuala Lumpur branch organised a dinner and medical talk at Holiday Inn on 2 May 2025, and invited SMA representatives to join their fellow doctors from Malaysia for an evening of knowledge exchange and collegiality. SMA representatives included SMA President Dr Ng Chee Kwan, SMA Honorary Secretary Clinical Asst Prof Benny Loo Kai Guo and Council member Adj Asst Prof Lambert Low Tchern Kuang.



Group photo of MMA Wilayah Persekutuan members and SMA representatives

AMS-CFPS-SMA Tripartite Dinner

The three professional bodies – Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AMS), College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS), and SMA – endeavour to meet twice a year to discuss various issues relating to the healthcare system and professional matters.

A dinner meeting hosted by AMS was organised on 8 April 2025. Topics discussed included the draft Health Information Bill, personal mobility aids and mandatory medical ethics. SMA representatives included SMA President Dr Ng Chee Kwan, SMA 1st Vice President Dr Daniel Lee Hsien Chieh and SMA Honorary Secretary Clinical Asst Prof Benny Loo Kai Guo.

Updated guide to a Healthier SG-compatible clinic management system

SMA wishes to highlight to Members the updated version of the "General Practitioners' Guide to a Healthier SG-compatible Clinic Management System" document by the Agency for Integrated Care, Synapse and the Ministry of Health.

The document, intended for Healthier SG-compatible clinics, has been updated as of 8 May 2025 and can be found at the following link: <https://bit.ly/4lcX2Fv>.

Members who are interested in adopting clinic management systems can peruse a CFPS review of the top five Healthier SG-compatible clinic management systems at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3HEiZ1x>. ♦

Celebrating 20 Years of Awareness of Macular Diseases Week



Text and photos by Koh Sheng Dong Dovan and Dr Siddharth Subramani

2024 marked 20 years since the inaugural Awareness of Macular Diseases Week (AMD Week). It is an annual public health campaign that aims to increase the awareness and understanding of macular diseases by emphasising the importance of education, early detection, and knowledge of treatment and rehabilitation options.

Enhancing education and awareness

Age-related macular degeneration is a leading cause of vision impairment in adults over 60 years old.¹ A study found that in 2015, more than 125,000 Singaporeans aged 40 and over were living with age-related macular degeneration, and this number is expected to approach 200,000 by 2040.² Despite its growing local prevalence, public awareness of the condition was once limited, but has increased gradually over the past two decades with the introduction of AMD Week.

AMD Week first began in 2005 as Age-related Macular Degeneration Awareness Week. In 2017, the public health campaign was renamed AMD Week to include more macular diseases such as myopic macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease, epiretinal membranes and macular holes. Raising awareness about macular diseases is crucial to mitigate its impact on the

quality of life of those affected. Early detection is key to allowing timely intervention and reducing the risk of irreversible vision loss. Educating patients about the risk factors for certain conditions can encourage lifestyle changes that can lower their risk of developing these conditions. The impact of macular diseases on the daily activities and independence of those affected highlights the need to educate the public on this disease.

AMD Week not only emphasises the significance of early detection but also reflects on the progress of treatment options for age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Merely 20 years ago, treatment for wet macular degeneration was limited to variants of laser therapy. These treatments could stop leakages and bleeding but often resulted in scarring and central vision loss. Research breakthroughs have led to more advanced treatments for wet macular degeneration, such as monoclonal antibodies targeting growth factors that stimulate abnormal blood vessel growth. This is a highly effective treatment, though it requires frequent injections, which can be burdensome for patients. Through the awareness raised by AMD Week, more people have become informed about these evolving and improved sight-saving treatment

options. It also highlights the importance of education and research in the field.

The birth of AMD Week

Adj A/Prof Au Eong Kah Guan spearheaded the inception of AMD Week 20 years ago when he was a member of the Scientific Advisory Panel of AMD Alliance International, a non-profit global alliance of organisations working to raise awareness of age-related macular degeneration in collaboration with Singapore Action Group of Elders. A/Prof Au Eong noted, "The push for AMD Week was driven by a fundamental need to address the growing challenge of age-related macular degeneration in a rapidly ageing local population. Our vision was to transform the landscape of eye health by educating the public, promoting early detection, and ensuring that more people receive the treatment they need to preserve their vision."

Although both organisations are now defunct, the campaign lives on. It was organised annually by the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences in Alexandra Hospital, and later by the same department when it moved to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital.

The campaign actively engages ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians from both the public and





private sectors to increase its reach within the community. Activities such as public health talks conducted in various languages, eye screenings, patient support group meetings, smoking cessation campaigns, healthy cooking demonstrations and art exhibitions are held across the nation. For instance, in 2010, an art exhibition featured portraits created by patients with age-related macular degeneration, offering insight into the visual distortions and abnormalities caused by the disease as seen through the eyes of those affected.³ These efforts continue to promote a greater understanding of age-related macular degeneration and its impact.

Over the years, the nationwide collaborative effort of community outreach attracted more and more participants, including the Singapore Optometric Association, Society of Opticianry Practitioners (Singapore), Health Promotion Board, patient support groups, Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped, and many other organisations. A special commemorative book, titled *A Vision for the Nation: A Decade of AMD Awareness Campaign in Singapore*, was published in 2014 by Dr Ajeet Madhav Wagle and his team to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the campaign in 2014, where then Senior Minister of State Dr Amy Khor graced the launch.

"The awareness of age-related macular degeneration in Singapore was quite low compared to awareness levels in many western countries as recent as 2006. The establishment of AMD Week helped to significantly increase the awareness of age-related macular degeneration in Singapore from 7.3%

in 2006 to 28% in 2011," said Dr Ajeet Madhav Wagle, who led the AMD Week campaign from 2008 to 2011 as the chairman of the organising committee.

20 years and beyond

AMD Week 2024 was launched on 5 October 2024 and chaired by Dr Siddharth Subramani, consultant ophthalmologist at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital. The 2024 run saw a week of public health talks on macular diseases in multiple languages, discounted eye screening at numerous locations, a media outreach campaign including awareness videos on Instagram created by influential content creators, the launch of a healthy eating cookbook, and an extensive array of health promotional booths set up by partners and sponsors during the launch event. The event was held in conjunction with the Geriatric Health Carnival and included additional booths such as diabetes screening, memory testing and falls assessment. In addition, a special half-day scientific programme for opticians, optometrists and optometry students was held in collaboration with Ngee Ann Polytechnic to equip them with the latest knowledge and updates in the field of macular diseases.

The ultimate goal of AMD Week is to make every Singaporean aware of macular degeneration, to know how to detect it early and to seek advice in a timely manner. Early detection and treatment can save sight and enable individuals to lead more fruitful and independent lives.

AMD Week continues to play a crucial role in educating the public and healthcare professionals about macular degeneration. Through nationwide

outreach and early detection initiatives, the campaign aims to protect the vision and quality of life of Singaporeans who are at risk of macular degeneration. As our population ages, raising awareness and encouraging timely intervention remains vital in the fight against this sight-threatening condition. ♦

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2. Ansah JP, Koh V, de Korne DF, et al. Projection of Eye Disease Burden in Singapore. *Ann Acad Med Singap* 2018; 47(1):13-28.
3. Sanjay S, Wagle AM, Hahn A, Au Eong KG. Seeing through the eyes of patients with age-related macular degeneration. *Ann Acad Med Singap* 2021; 50(3):283-4.

Legend

1. Group photo during AMD Week 2023 including Guest of Honour Mr Derek Goh, Member of Parliament for Nee Soon GRC
2. Ophthalmologists at the eye screening station at Goodlife Khatib during AMD Week 2024 launch

Dovan is a Year 1 dental student at the National University of Singapore. In his free time, he enjoys taekwondo, baking and volunteering.



Dr Siddharth is a consultant ophthalmologist and vitreoretinal surgeon at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital who subspecialises in medical and surgical retinal conditions. He trained and worked as a consultant in the UK prior to moving to Singapore in 2022.



Passion for Global Health

A Path Less Travelled

Text and photos by Dr Hoe Pei Shan



She loved her work as an emergency physician in one of the busiest emergency departments in Singapore. But in 2022, Dr Tiah Ling left her stable consultant job at Changi General Hospital to pursue a nomadic life of providing healthcare in various low-resource areas, prepared to hop from passion project to passion project while earning a fraction of her then specialist pay.

"Although I have enjoyed a satisfying career in emergency medicine (EM) with very supportive bosses and colleagues, there are other things I have always wanted to pursue, and I realised I might regret not giving myself the chance to try them," said Dr Tiah. "As my 50th birthday approached, I saw it as a good time for me to 'step off the train' and pause after spending nearly 20 years working within institutional settings. This pause would hopefully allow me to reassess my priorities and decide how I want to move forward in the next chapter of my life."

She had no fixed destination when she left and chanced upon a job opening soon after that brought her to Mae Sot, a Thai town at the Myanmar border. Having been there since mid-2023, Dr Tiah is currently the technical consultant for an upcoming emergency care unit (ECU) under the Mae Tao Clinic (MTC), a community-based organisation that has served the migrant community and displaced populations for more than 30 years.

She rents a single room in an apartment shared by several other international staff and volunteers at MTC, getting around on foot or driving

a beaten jeep lent to her by MTC founder and director Dr Cynthia Maung, a pioneer Burmese physician. It is not uncommon to hear gunfire around Mae Sot, particularly closer to the Moei River separating Mae Sot from Myawaddy, Myanmar, where the strains of Burmese civil unrest remain.

"Most were surprised that I had left institutional practice without any concrete plans, but they were largely supportive of my decision. I think when I shared about the longer-term deployment at MTC in Mae Sot, they were naturally concerned about security and general living conditions since the town is along the Thailand-Myanmar border and sounded quite *ulu* (Malay for remote)," said Dr Tiah.

Venturing into global health

Dr Tiah's foray into global healthcare began as a junior EM trainee when she joined a medical mission to Malang, Indonesia, helping to develop a new system of triage and EM at Dr Saiful Anwar Hospital and launch an entirely new ambulance service.

"It illustrated to me vividly that optimising patient care goes beyond clinical work," said Dr Tiah. "A well-functioning healthcare system that serves patients optimally requires multiple sectors working together with multi-pronged approaches. Medical expertise is just one piece of the bigger picture in improving health outcomes."

She went on to further hone her knowledge and skills in humanitarian aid and development assistance through the International Emergency Medicine Fellowship programme at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Armed with a Master of Public Health degree, Dr Tiah took on a variety of fieldwork spanning Africa and Asia between 2009 and 2010, including helping to strengthen emergency care delivery at a district hospital in Ghana.

Subsequently in 2014 and 2015, she was a facilitator in a hospital management training workshop in Afghanistan, and a consultant for the joint World Health Organization-International Labour Organisation Project in Lao People's



Democratic Republic. In the latter role, she designed and implemented quality assurance mechanisms to support the establishment of the National Health Insurance Scheme in the Vang Vieng district, Laos.

Dr Tiah noted that global health bridges service delivery, education, research, innovation, capacity building, policy development and programme implementation, and hence she found it valuable to build relevant skills and experience in these fields.

“Time commitment is another practical consideration. For professionals in Singapore, short stints of one to two weeks for on-site support with potential follow-up visits are often more feasible,” she added. “Regardless of the nature of the projects, essential ‘soft’ skills include strong work ethics, effective communication, adaptability, resourcefulness, and the ability to work independently.”

Singapore’s support for refugee healthcare at MTC

Since 2023, healthcare professionals from Singapore have been supporting MTC. The clinic provided over 100,000 consultations in 2023, more than twice the number in 2021, as the community of displaced persons grew after a political coup. The clinic is only staffed with ten doctors, mostly from Myanmar, and relies heavily on medics and nursing aides who have not gone through formal medical training.

The clinic provides and facilitates life-saving procedures, active surveillance of communicable diseases, and helps ensure adequate nutritional needs and food safety for its patients. In recent years, the clinic has seen an increase in war casualties, emergency obstetric cases, incidence of malaria and patients in need of continued HIV treatment. In early 2023, MTC identified the need

for an ECU to support their 200-bed inpatient and outpatient departments.

Around that time, former Singapore ambassador to Myanmar Mr Robert Chua and Prof Tay Boon Keng of the Singapore Health Services (SingHealth) International Collaboration Office came up with an initiative to provide support from Singapore for MTC’s needs, which Dr Tiah described as “pivotal”.

Working together with a team led by Singapore General Hospital’s Prof Venkataraman Anantharaman, Singapore collaborators have provided valuable input for the design of the new ECU space, scheduled to open in 2025. The team is also helping to develop a structured ultrasound curriculum for emergency contexts and contributing to refining clinical workflows. Ultrasound is a crucial diagnostic and procedural tool in resource-strapped MTC, where the only other imaging device available is a small tabletop unit donated by a veterinary service, which was designed to take X-ray scans of animals but is being used to image small human fractures and locate foreign bodies in trauma cases.

Simultaneously, Prof Tay started an orthopaedic programme to deliver free injectables targeting joint and tissue degeneration, and has been working with industry partners and philanthropists to help raise money and to donate supplies to MTC. Prof Tay has also been in discussion with Mae Sot General Hospital, the nearest Thai public hospital to MTC, on their support for border health issues.

Another aspect of healthcare in MTC that the Singapore team is assisting with is nursing. Prof Lim Swee Hia, Senior Director of Special Projects and the former Group Director of Nursing at SingHealth, led the designing and inauguration of a Bachelor of Nursing Science programme that started training its first batch of students in 2023.



A continuing journey

For the immediate future, Dr Tiah Liang remains committed to the MTC ECU project till at least 2026, and is focused on designing and setting up a dedicated space for delivering emergency care services for the displaced community. It has been a journey filled with challenges and a “steep learning curve” navigating unique sociopolitical dynamics along the border.

Beyond that, Dr Tiah has “no concrete plans yet” but knows where her heart lies, saying that she “hope(s) to continue contributing to regional development work, particularly in strengthening border health services.” ♦

Legend

1. Mae Tao Clinic patients wait in line for their medical care
2. Medics undergoing ultrasound training and practise using a portable ultrasound device
3. Dr Tiah Liang, pictured outside the consult and ultrasound imaging rooms of Mae Tao Clinic



Dr Hoe is a former national gymnast, literature major and journalist-turned-physician. A Tan Tock Seng Hospital emergency department medical officer at the time of writing, she has interests in global health, emergency medicine and point-of-care ultrasound, and has completed the AIU-NUS Advanced Critical Care Echo course. She was part of a Singapore team to Mae Tao Clinic in 2024.





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Jade Appreciation Night



Date:
22 August 2025, Friday

Time:
7 pm to 9.30 pm

Venue:
8 Marina Boulevard,
Marina Bay Financial Centre, Tower 1
Singapore 018981
Level 21, Connect Zone

Unveil the timeless allure of jade!

Join us for an extraordinary evening and dinner with a renowned fine jade expert boasting over five decades of experience. Discover the fascinating and intricate world of this prized gemstone, and gain insider knowledge on sourcing, grading and selecting exceptional quality jade as you witness its transformation from raw stone to breathtaking masterpiece.

Buffet dinner
and champagne
will be provided

Exclusive jade pieces
will be available
for purchase

Complimentary
and exclusive for
SMA Members

Participants
may bring up to
one guest

Limited to
**80 pax
only!**

Minimum to start:
40 pax

Scan the QR code to
register now!



**Fully
Subscribed!**



Social Connections *Beyond Medicine*

Text by Joanne Ng, Deputy Manager, Membership Services

SMA organised several exciting activities in the first half of 2025, bringing Members together for fun and memorable experiences.

Wine & Paint Night

On 28 March 2025, a small group of Members gathered for a Wine & Paint Night at Little Farms Cafe, Valley Point. This creative evening fostered team bonding while exploring artistic talents through watercolour painting. As Members sipped on three types of wine (red, white and rosé), they embraced their inner artists and enjoyed a relaxing and entertaining evening. The intimate setting allowed for great conversations and laughter, strengthening connections.

Sake Tasting Workshops

We hosted two successful Sake Tasting Workshops on 25 April and 23 May 2025, attracting a total of 72 participants. Held at Citi Wealth Hub and sponsored by Citibank, these workshops introduced participants to the rich culture of Japanese sake, letting them explore different varieties and learn about the brewing process. The events were well received, with Members appreciating the opportunity to learn about and sample various sakes. The workshops also provided a unique chance for Members to connect over a shared interest in Japanese culture.

Memorable experiences and lasting friendships

The success of these events demonstrates our commitment to creating engaging and diverse activities for Members. By offering a range of social events, we aim to

cater to different interests and preferences, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie among Members. These events not only provide platforms for socialising but also allow Members to develop new skills, explore new interests and build lasting relationships.

We look forward to organising more exciting events in the future, continuing to bring Members together and create memorable experiences. Stay tuned for upcoming events, including jade appreciation workshops, durian feasts, decoupage art workshops and talks on topics such as succession planning and business continuity for doctors. Keep an eye on your emails for more information on coming events! ♦

Legend

1. Here's a toast! Sake and smiles with the medical squad
2. Doctor's orders: sake and smiles
3. Brushstrokes of care
4. Five bottles, endless fun



19 YEARS IN POLITICS:

From an Ophthalmologist

To move from the realm of medicine to the domain of politics may not be a common path, yet both fields are grounded in the same love and commitment to serve our fellow man. We invite Dr Lim Wee Kiak to share his thoughts as one who has travelled these two paths, serving the nation through action and policy alike.

Text and photos by Dr Lim Wee Kiak

I was an “accidental” politician. With the intention of improving the estate my family lived in, I started volunteering and serving in the Marsiling Zone 8 Resident’s Committee in 1998 after my Master of Medicine (Ophthalmology) examination. This initial step led me to subsequently serve in Fuchun Community Club, Sembawang Town Council, Northwest Community Development Council and Marsiling Secondary School over a period of eight years. Through these experiences, I made many friends from different walks of life and gained a better understanding of our community and various government policies.

In 2004, after returning to Singapore from my one-year Health Manpower Development Plan (HMDP) fellowship at the National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health, USA, I was invited by then Marsiling Member of Parliament (MP), Mr Hawazi Daipi, to attend tea sessions organised as policy feedback sessions. I was later asked to participate in the General Elections in 2006. With much hesitation and trepidation, I agreed and thus began my journey in politics.

Improving lives

Balancing my responsibilities as an MP and a consultant at Singapore National Eye Centre was challenging. In 2007, after completing my HMDP bond, I decided to go into private practice, which provided me with the flexibility to better care for both my constituents and my patients.

As clinicians, we are accustomed to running clinics. As MPs, we run weekly Meet-the-People Sessions (MPS), which are akin to social clinics. We listen to our residents, analyse and diagnose their problems, and prescribe solutions through appeal letters to relevant government agencies. Like in medicine, we cannot cure all our patients, but we can alleviate their symptoms and always offer comfort and a listening ear. Most MPS cases are simple and straightforward, but there are challenging ones that we escalate to ministers and Parliament. Constituency work is very meaningful, and I have had the privilege of sharing the joys and tears of the residents in Sembawang, watching an entire generation grow up over the last 19 years.

During my medical student days, I enjoyed playing the city-building video game SimCity to relieve study pressure. Managing the town council and being actively involved in Sembawang town development over the last two decades has been like a real-life SimCity in action. From a young and small town with limited amenities, Sembawang town today features a new community hub, Bukit Canberra, replete with an indoor sports hall containing 18 badminton courts, an 800-seat hawker centre, Sembawang Polyclinic, the largest indoor ActiveSG gym in Singapore, a public swimming pool with outdoor and sheltered pools, a large outdoor gym, and therapeutic gardens. I have had the honour and privilege of witnessing the phenomenal growth of Sembawang town, including the Sembawang Hot Spring Park.

I am also blessed to have been part of a private practice group, as I was able to rely on my colleagues to look after my patients when I am occupied with MP work. Managing both roles effectively would be impossible if I were in solo practice.





In medicine, we treat one patient at a time, as each patient is unique and deserves our full attention. Our work as doctors is very specific to our patients. In politics, as MPs, we legislate laws that formulate policies affecting millions of Singaporeans, both present and future generations. I am very glad and privileged to have had the opportunity to help shape policies to improve the lives of Singaporeans.

As a politician, I also played a role in promoting Singapore's interests at regional and international parliamentary meetings. Unlike international medical conferences, these meetings involve representing Singapore and making friends with fellow parliamentarians to lobby for their support for Singapore.

A fulfilling journey

The last 27 years (serving as a grassroots volunteer and later as an MP) have passed quickly, as each day was exciting

and meaningful. I am most blessed to have a supportive spouse who has raised our three children mostly by herself, as my political and clinical work occupied all my weekdays and nights. Even weekends were filled with grassroots events and other community engagements, including religious groups and clan associations. I am also fortunate to have worked alongside passionate grassroots leaders and branch activists. They are all volunteers who generously contribute their time and resources to improve the lives of others in the community.

I find more similarities than differences between being a politician and an ophthalmologist. Both strive to make our patients' and residents' lives better. As an ophthalmologist, I have helped many patients see better and clearer. As a politician, I hope I have helped Parliament see with crystal clarity as we debated bills and issues in the House. ♦

Legend

1. Floor party with Canberra residents
2. Last block visit during General Elections 2025

Dr Lim, 57, is an ophthalmologist at Eagle Eye Centre. He served four terms (19 years) as a Member of Parliament serving the division of Canberra in Sembawang GRC.



Caring for a changing Singapore

How GPs are adapting to an ageing nation

by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)

To meet the growing needs of our ageing population, the role of a General Practitioner (GP) has gone beyond being the customary gatekeeper, with emerging trends and technological advancements reshaping the way primary care is delivered in Singapore.

From Episodic Care to Holistic, Person-Centred Care

Traditionally focused on acute, episodic care, GPs are now central to managing chronic diseases, promoting preventive health and coordinating community-based services. There is an increased focus on personalised care plans, which are able to address a patient's multiple medical conditions, the social determinants of health, and patient empowerment.

The introduction of Healthier SG marks a pivotal shift in primary care. GPs are now expected to adopt a longitudinal approach, focusing on long-term health outcomes rather than isolated treatments.

Enhanced Role in Preventive Care

Recognising that healthcare intervention goes beyond episodic treatments, GPs in the present day

are more involved in national screening and early intervention programmes, health education, disease prevention and lifestyle prescriptions.

Collaboration with the Larger Care Community

There is also a stronger push for collaborative care as chronic disease management moves beyond hospitals to the community. Compared to the past where GPs operated largely independently from the broader healthcare structure, GPs today are integrated into regional health systems and have access to the support of multidisciplinary teams in the Primary Care Networks (PCNs).

Complementing clinical interventions, social prescriptions have also emerged as a powerful tool in managing chronic diseases. GPs are called to conduct social prescribing and refer patients to non-clinical programmes and services within the community that support physical, mental and social well-being, to improve patients' lifestyles and health outcomes.

Expanded Use of Technology and Data

Coming off the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, the primary care sector experienced a rapid digital transformation. GPs now use electronic medical records, perform virtual consultations and issue e-prescriptions, and adopt digital health tools in their routine practice, which allow for timely interventions especially for elderly patients and those with mobility issues.

We generally see more patients with chronic illnesses, as well as those with complex conditions and multiple comorbidities. The focus of healthcare in Singapore has also shifted to being more preventive rather than reactive, resulting in us spending more time in advocating for preventive health.

- Dr Moses Lai,
Mary Medical Clinic
and Surgery



GPs' participation in the National Electronic Health Record (NEHR) also enables data sharing across institutions and enhances patient care.

Policy-shaping, Leadership and Continuing Professional Development

In the past, GPs had limited involvement in health policy and community health planning. Today, GPs have more influence in policy development, pilot programmes and community outreach. For example, as part of the primary care clinical service roadmap, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is partnering with GP leaders from SMA, College of Family Physicians Singapore, PCNs and healthcare clusters, to develop Healthier SG Care Protocols to ensure effective, consistent and well-coordinated care for patients.

Compared to the early years where formal continuing education was less structured, GPs are now required to engage in continuing medical education (CME) and professional development to maintain licencing and keep up with the latest standards. GPs also support future generations of practitioners through teaching, mentoring and training within evolving care models.

Some of the key challenges facing GPs are the rising healthcare costs and the management of increasingly complex chronic medical issues in an ageing population. To address these challenges, I have embraced governmental schemes such as Healthier SG and allied health and auxiliary services provided by the PCN. This approach enables me to offer holistic and individualised multi-disciplinary management to complex chronic patients, while simultaneously mitigating the rising healthcare costs for patients.

*- Dr Chung Wing Hong,
Chung & Ee Medical Clinic*



Family Medicine is to Medicine what Philosophy is to Life – a guiding core, with patient, family and community at its heart.

In today's evolving landscape, the GP's role has grown more complex and nuanced; shaped by technology, shifting expectations, calls for greater transparency and accountability, and collaboration with several stakeholders including community partners. Sometimes, these are strange bedfellows, from a GP's perspective.

Nonetheless, the well-being of each patient is a tapestry woven from genetics, health literacy, social ties, finances, mental resilience and cultural roots.

Therefore, amid rising challenges and stress, there is renewed purpose – learning, growth, and the chance to drive meaningful, holistic community care. This transformation demands a mindset shift for both healers and those seeking health, to embrace a broader, more connected vision of well-being.

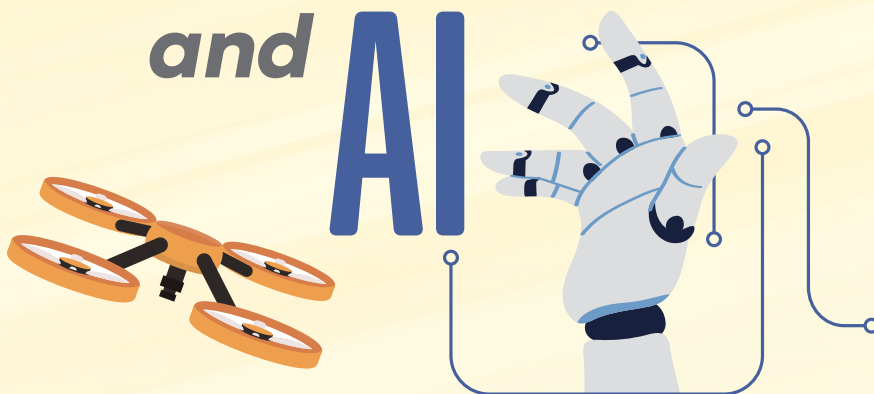
*- Dr Mohd Baisal,
Shifa Clinic & Surgery*

Supporting GPs in Supporting Patients

As the population continues to age and the burden of chronic diseases rises, GPs will increasingly be called upon not just to treat illnesses, but also to manage long-term conditions, provide preventive care and coordinate support across multiple touchpoints in the system.

While these evolving responsibilities may appear daunting, GPs are not alone in the journey. AIC, together with MOH and the PCNs, remain committed in supporting GPs through policy, subvention, upskilling and resource sharing. Together, this collaborative ecosystem aims to ensure that GPs remain empowered to deliver accessible and comprehensive care today and in years to come.

From DRONES to MEDICINE and AI



Text and photos by Dr Daniel He

When you mention the word drones, what comes to most people's mind is aerial photography – people flying small aircraft taking photographs from the sky – but the field of drones encompasses much more. It is a fascinating combination of electro-mechanical systems, software algorithms and telecommunications that covers a wide variety of robotic craft. They range from flying platforms and ground rovers to boats and submarines. These craft all share the common traits of being able to operate at a distance, and the ability to function autonomously or semi-autonomously.

How it began

I first got involved with drones during my medical school years. A YouTube video on the nascent sport of drone racing caught my attention, and I ordered some parts off the Internet to experiment with. After a few frustrating weeks, I realised that I was hopelessly under-equipped to build anything that would ever leave the ground. I reached out to local drone enthusiasts for help and started my journey into the fascinating community of drone builders. At that time, more than a decade ago, the field of drones was still in its infancy and you could not just go out and buy one. To fly one, you had to build it yourself. There were no courses you could take either; instead, you had to engage with a quirky community of tinkerers, backyard inventors and coders.

It was an exciting time for drone development. Small groups and hobbyists were at the cutting edge of drone technology. These informal networks consisted of enthusiasts who were writing open-source code, designing circuit boards and adapting smartphone electronics onto a huge variety of platforms. There were no large corporations or institutions that dominated the space, and regulations were mostly non-existent. The groups were diverse in backgrounds, from aerospace and software engineers to lawyers and Air Force officers. Everyone had their own field of interest, with some people specialising in control software and others developing expertise in radio frequencies, electric motors or aerodynamics.

Every month, there would be a new release of some piece of software or hardware which opened up a whole new set of capabilities that we could explore. Locally, we would meet in open fields to





test prototypes, and in living rooms and backyards to swap tools, solder circuit boards, 3D-print parts, tune software and test radio control links. Every build was a collaborative experiment that was either a spectacular crash or would soar triumphantly into the sky.

Things got to a point where our local community of enthusiasts were building highly sophisticated drones. There were some which could lift payloads of 100 kg or navigate autonomously across the breadth of Singapore; others could accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in under a second and pull 10 g turns on every axis. We eventually started a formal association to organise races that drew participants from around the world, and we also assisted the Singapore Government in developing unmanned aerial vehicle regulations to keep people safe.

Some members of the local community went on to start valuable commercial enterprises, deploying drones in industries ranging from filmmaking, remote surveying and building inspections, to security and defence. Similar organisations in Ukraine have formed the core teams responsible for developing drone squads involved in the conflict.

Growing interests beyond drones

Despite the distraction of many other pursuits, drones have kept my interest till this day. Drones cover an extremely broad space, with endless fields to explore. Beyond its role as an interesting pastime, I have found that my involvement in drones gives me insight into the foundational building blocks of technological advances that will change the world in the years

ahead. The systems that drones are built on, such as weighted feedback algorithms, sensor fusion and electro-mechanical interfaces, cover principles that are broadly applicable to the understanding of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and robotics.

The intersection of AI, machine vision and robotics will dramatically alter the world in the decade ahead and will have a profound impact on how we practise medicine. To provide the best care, physicians will need to understand these technologies, and their capabilities and associated pitfalls. The best performing medical teams will be human-machine hybrids leveraging the strengths of each. As humans, we will never be able to memorise more than an AI model that has the global corpus of medical knowledge in its database, or outperform a surgical robot guided by sensors with a resolution down to a micrometre, operating at 10,000 frames per second, but we are not about to become obsolete.

Despite the headlines of AI systems acing postgraduate medical board examinations and law school tests, humans remain irreplaceable in many ways. On a recent Abstraction and Reasoning Corpus for Artificial General Intelligence test, which is a test of general intelligence, the most advanced AI models struggled to get a score above 2%, while the average human score was 60%. Skills such as building rapport and trust with patients so that they convey an accurate history, or understanding that there is no optimum treatment outcome that applies to everyone, are skills that remain firmly in human hands. The ability to navigate novel situations

and integrate broad knowledge from fields beyond medicine into the decision-making process are areas that humans far outperform any AI currently available and will likely continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

An important reminder

It will be an exciting and challenging time for doctors, but the fundamental principles still hold true, and maybe more so than ever. To paraphrase a quote from the Hippocratic Oath that remains an excellent guide:

"I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy and understanding may outweigh the *MedAI's treatment plan* or the *surgical robot's knife*." ♦

Legend

1. Singapore's inaugural drone race
2. 100 kg heavy lift drone prototype
3. Science Centre Singapore's Drone Odyssey Challenge

Dr He is the co-founder of The Kinetic Option, Momentum Electric Marine and The Lo & Behold Group and is the current president of the Multirotor Association of Singapore. He embarked on his second career in medicine at Duke-NUS Medical School and had the best time of his life in Singapore General Hospital's Department of Emergency Medicine.



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Dr Chia Yih Woei

Chairperson, SMA Sports & Games Committee

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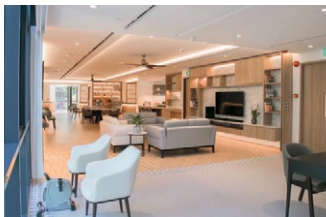
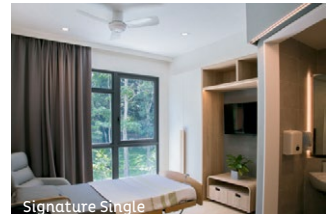


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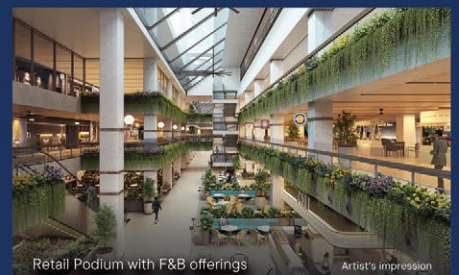
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