

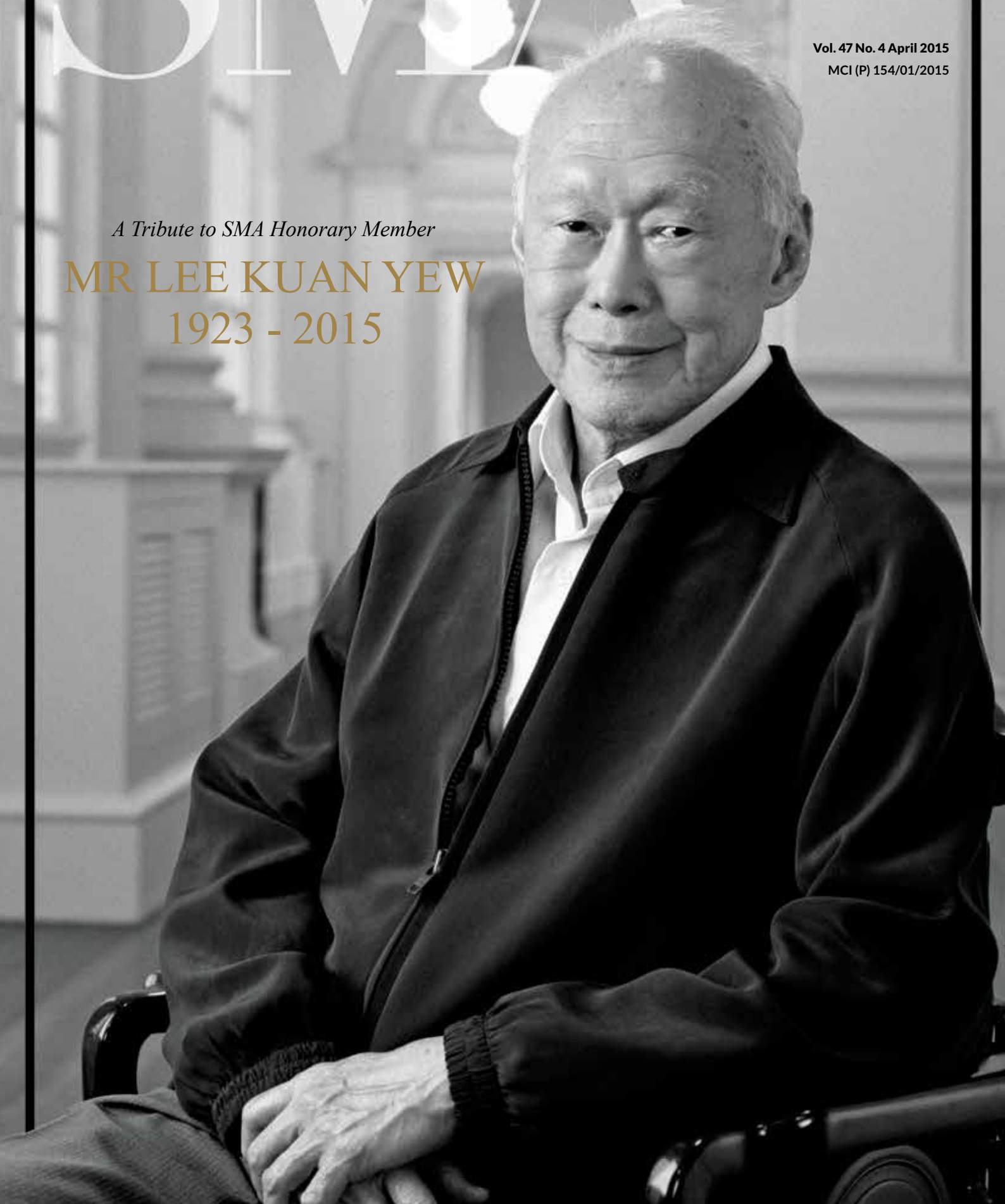
# SMA NEWS



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*A Tribute to SMA Honorary Member*

**MR LEE KUAN YEW**  
**1923 - 2015**



# We Remember

By Dr Tina Tan, Deputy Editor

**I WRITE** this piece bleary-eyed and foggy-brained after a night of queuing. It was the longest queue I have ever joined in my life – the queue to see Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s lying-in-state at Parliament House. As we waited in line, my husband asked me what it was like to watch someone die. A morbid question, yes, but given the context, it was apt. Unlike my medical colleagues (especially those in palliative medicine and oncology), I have not personally witnessed the deaths of many patients. However, I’ve had my fair share of the experience as well as other equally morbid and strange ones, which I will get to in a bit.

Many tributes and eulogies have been written for the late Mr Lee. I am not here to do that, though I have found myself compelled to compose a more personal and private tribute which I’ve shared with family and close friends. Instead, what I’m here to do is dedicate this issue to Mr Lee, who had a tremendous impact on our Little Red Dot. What some may not be aware of, though, were his particular contributions to national healthcare, which SMA recognised when he was awarded SMA Honorary Membership in 2012. We reprint his citation (which he autographed), delivered during the SMA Annual Dinner that same year; and A/Prof Chin Jing Jih also shares his eulogy for Mr Lee.

The passing of someone well known and close to our hearts, even if expected, tends to bring a jolt to our hearts, and reminds us of the grim reality of our mortal lives. How much more so when that passing is unexpected? Adj A/Prof Vijayan Appasamy was programme director of the general surgery (GS) residency programme at National Healthcare Group, and his unexpected death has left many gaps to be filled (both physical and emotional). Our Editor, Dr Tan Yia Swam, together with various staff members from the Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s GS department, has penned a eulogy in memory of A/Prof Vijayan for this issue.

Grief is an emotion that many of us are familiar with. It is part and parcel of life. Most times, we deal with our grief, and then we move on with life. Sometimes, the grief persists, and it becomes depression. Likewise, for any strong emotions or difficult life circumstances that we encounter, we process and deal with them. Sometimes, that process goes haywire and our mental well-being becomes jeopardised. We may start to experience unusual things, and we may cope in unhealthy ways. Likewise, our own patients may tell us that they see, hear, or feel peculiar things too. That’s why, this month we include a short series of articles pertaining to the mental well-being of our patients, and for ourselves as healthcare professionals.

Dr Lui Yit Shiang and Dr Soo Shuenn Chiang discuss how we can manage our patients who tell us such strange things. Dr Tor Phern Chern focuses on how to distinguish patients with genuine problems, from those who may seek to play the healthcare system for ulterior motives. Dr Gillian Lim contributes a light-hearted article with her (unofficial) advice on how we can diagnose and treat burnout in ourselves. And finally, our Indulge series features several of our colleagues and their methods of relaxing and unwinding from work.

So at the end of the day, as I queued to pay my last respects to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, I did wonder about death and experienced feelings of grief. But what is important for all of us is to go through the process and allow our psyche to have some closure. The more expressive ones talk or write about their sadness. Others choose to deal with their emotions in private. However you choose to deal with negativity (grief, anger, stress, etc), remember that there is a positive side to things. Medication can treat depression and psychosis. Engaging in hobbies and happy pastimes can help distract one from the burdens of work and commitments. Remembering the achievements of those who have passed, and continuing on in the same spirit as what they sought to achieve – that helps us to move past the sadness and grief. ■



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