

# THE EDITOR'S MUSINGS

May holds great significance for me: my first son was born in May four years ago, and Mother's Day took on a personal significance since. This year, my second son has allowed me to appreciate the joys and stresses of being a mother to an infant, all over again. I daresay that all parents would cite "my child(ren)" in their top three answers when asked the question "What makes you happy?" Other answers may encompass a wide variety of things: good health, some wealth, the ever-elusive "work-life" balance, feeling good, etc. We bid farewell to Dr Natalie Koh, who stepped down from the Editorial Board due to other personal commitments. Please join me in welcoming Dr Chie Zhi Ying, a seasoned and experienced writer. I look forward to her involvement in *SMA News*.

We are happy (!) to have Dr Tambyah Siok Kuan as our feature writer on "Choosing Happiness". She has done extensive work and research on happiness and extrapolated this to doctors – I think the article is especially useful to those of us who have ever felt burnt-out. Take some time to read through and rediscover your love and passion for our noble profession.

Dr Chan Yeow pens a letter to a fictional patient on home ventilation, highlighting the importance of making an advanced care plan (not to be confused with an "Advanced Medical Directive"). Dr Lee Chung Seng shares how some people derive happiness, based on his experience with patients with terminal conditions.

Dr Ong Chooi Peng reviews the book *Gratitude* by the late Dr Oliver Sacks; I have yet to read it, but I will. It will be a great reminder to be thankful for what I have, rather than complain about what I think I lack! An ear, nose and throat resident, Dr Chan Ching Yee, reflects on the joy and satisfaction derived from helping patients during the course of her training. Dr Leong Choon Kit writes on his role of mentoring and helping new GPs start up their solo practices in this month's "GP Matters".

The common theme in these articles is that happiness, satisfaction and fulfilment may be achieved when we find meaning in what we do.

Having been based in institutions since graduation, I have not experienced managed care directly but I have heard much about it from friends who are GPs and specialists in private practices. In the ideal form, it helps a doctor to have a steady pool of patients and good cost-effectiveness, which benefits both doctors and patients. However, people being people, good intentions may get overridden by more pressing needs.

The SMA and the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS) have collaborated on a survey on managed care, and we share the results with you in this issue. We remind readers to apply a critical mindset when reading it; we recognise that the strength of the study is limited. There is another weakness inherent to all such studies, in that selection and recall biases may play a role in the type of responses we receive.

Nevertheless, we hope that the survey captures a snapshot of what some doctors on the ground feel about managed care and I would like to highlight a few personal observations:

1. There seems to be room for improvement in the workflows, especially regarding the amount and timeliness of reimbursements to the doctors. Do keep in mind inflation and the increasing costs of living for everyone in the past decade.
2. The restrictions on medications prescribed and referrals to specialists may potentially affect patient care.

As a doctor who is not affected by managed care, I have no personal stake in this. But even I recognise the importance of knowing the potential problems. I agree with the closing comments of the study that:

1. The triple aim of enhancing patient experience, improving population health and reducing cost can only be achieved when healthcare providers feel that they are treated fairly and find meaning in their practice.
2. The operations of managed care organisations have a major impact on our primary healthcare system.
3. The SMA and the CFPS welcome initiatives to improve the present state of managed care in Singapore.

With this, I leave you all with much food for thought. Work well, stay happy and be healthy! ♦



Dr Tan Yia Swam is an associate consultant at the Breast Department of KK Women's and Children's Hospital. She continues to juggle the commitments of being a doctor, a mother, a wife and the increased duties of *SMA News* Editor. She also tries to keep time aside for herself and friends, both old and new.

*Yia Swam*  
Editor

# WELCOME ON BOARD

A big hello to readers of *SMA News*! I am honoured and happy to be a new member of the *SMA News* Editorial Board; so many thanks for giving me the opportunity to write here.

I started writing for *SMA News* since my medical school days, sharing my journey as a medical student and now as a junior doctor. I feel that I have "grown up" with the newsletter over the years.

My passion is in writing. I have the pleasure of penning columns for *LianHe Zaobao*, *Shin Min Daily News* and *Health No.1*, touching on health-related topics and any interesting issues. I also enjoy singing, watching movies and travelling.

I am a medical officer who is interested in family medicine and am now seeing patients in a polyclinic. In the course of my work, I have learnt a great deal from fellow colleagues and patients on life and medicine. I am sure that you too have many interesting stories to share with fellow doctors.

Hope to hear from you soon! ◆



Dr Chie Zhi Ying