

The EDITOR'S MUSINGS



Tan Yia Swam

Editor

On 31 January 2019, the Singapore Medical Council held a meeting with key appointment holders from the SMA, College of Family Physicians Singapore, Academy of Medicine, Singapore and the SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism on the \$100,000 fine's case. Dr Lee Pheng Soon, who chaired the meeting, presents a succinct report in this issue. We note that there are ongoing discussions and reserve further speculation on this matter.

On 21 January 2019, the medical profession lost a great doctor and teacher – Prof Tan Cheng Lim. Prof Ivy Ng pens his eulogy, bringing to light many of his contributions to paediatrics and also recounts anecdotes of his teachings.

As the world celebrates International Women's Day on 8 March this year, with the theme #BalanceforBetter, we too celebrate the achievements of some of our female doctors in their careers and personal lives. Three accomplished women, emergency physician A/Prof Eillyne Seow, general surgeon A/Prof Tan Su-Ming and orthopaedic surgeon Dr Tan Sok Chuen, have kindly shared their reflections on the challenges they had encountered in their careers, simply because they were women.

Over the years, as medical schools relaxed their quota and allowed more women to pursue medicine

as a career, it would seem natural to have increasing equality in the workplace. However, Dr Joanna Chan and another female doctor (who prefers to remain anonymous) list the problems they face on the ground as working mothers.

Among my immediate circle of female friends and colleagues, I would say almost half of them faced difficulties in conceiving, or miscarriages and/or medical issues during pregnancy. How much of this could have been avoided? No one will ever know. While there is no point in regretting what has passed in my own life, I personally advise all young couples in medicine to seriously weigh the pros and cons of certain career or training tracks if they also plan to start and raise a family. I won't say this just to the ladies, as the decision should be made as a couple. This is a complex issue and I could go on and on about it.

Prof Helen Smith of Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine is currently leading a research project that looks into factors influencing female healthcare professionals' decisions to stay or leave the workforce, and her team describes the project and its objectives. I hope that our women doctors here can spare some time to help contribute to this and perhaps we could create an even more supportive working environment for the working mother.

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

In case the men feel neglected, I'm also inviting dads with young kids to share their experiences!

In seeking "balance for better", we must acknowledge that workplace discrimination still exists and recognise harassment in all its various forms. *SMA News* will soon be embarking on a series of articles to educate our readers.

Finally, how can we empower fellow women to find their own balance? And to the men, how do you achieve balance in your personal and professional relationships? For all of us, let's strive to provide equality for our patients. Their gender, race and socio-economic status should not be a deterrent in getting good-quality healthcare. ♦