

FROM *Students' Council* TO *SMA Council*



Text by Dr Tan Yia Swam, Editor

This marks my fifth year since taking over as Editor of the *SMA News*, just over 12 years since my first article (<http://bit.ly/2FWUOYN>) in *SMA News*, and 12 years of serving on the SMA Council. What started as a once-off parody article somehow developed into an invitation to join the *SMA News* editorial board and the SMA Council.

It has been a very interesting “extra-curricular activity” since; I had to juggle my career, my growing family and learning what it means to be an “Editor”. There have been many ups and downs over the years, and there have been times when I thought it would be easier to focus on myself and stop this “SMA nonsense”. But looking at the service of the long-serving Council Members – Pheng Soon, Chiang Yin, Choon Lai, Yeh Woei, Tien Hua and Jing Jih – I see their passion and commitment for public service, and how they truly put service before self, which motivates me to emulate and continue to serve.

The Council meets once a month, often from 9 pm till midnight. During which, there are active debates and discussions on the dozens of situations that affect our profession.

We hold each other accountable for these attendances. We are volunteers. In addition, many of us serve in other committees and projects. And this is all on top of our respective medical practices. Can you just imagine the time and effort we each put in?

What I have gained from my volunteering with SMA though is the camaraderie and friendship with the Council Members (past and present) and the secretariat staff. Special thanks go to big brother, Han Chong, for his encouragement and gentle humour over the years.

The *SMA News* is the voice of the Council and the voice of the Members. It is *not* my personal blog. Though, the Editor can shape the direction of the publication and engage members in meaningful ways. I am fortunate to have a good team in the editorial board, and wonderful capable staff providing support. Our writers have been responsive and enthusiastic. Some others we approached have declined; I think they are too humble and unnecessarily worried about their self-perceived lack of writing skills. I have tried various ways to expand interaction with readers – photography

contests, comics and a wider range of Indulge articles – while holding on to the traditional columns from the SMA President, SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism, and interviews, etc.

Sometimes, I wonder if anyone still reads this. *SMA News* articles are free, not behind a paywall, and yet no one seems to repost. The doctors on the editorial board constantly think of new angles to address current issues, and we are open to suggestions and new ideas. We hope that you, the readers, would let us know how else we can make this newsletter more meaningful for you. Write to us at news@sma.org.sg.

It has been a good 60 years for the SMA. I hope to live to see the next 60 and rejoice in our future contributions! ♦

Dr Tan is thankful to KK Women's and Children's Hospital, Department of Breast Surgery, especially her head of department and the division chairman, for the past five years' experience and opportunities. Starting May 2019, she will be venturing into private practice. Meanwhile, she still juggles the commitments of being a doctor, a wife, the *SMA News* Editor and a mother of three. She also tries to keep time aside for herself and friends, both old and new.

