

"Why should I exercise? It only makes me sweat!"

"Everything that gets worse when we grow older gets better when we exercise!" answered Dr Lee I-Min of Harvard Medical School, our keynote speaker at the 31st SMA National Medical Convention. The Convention, co-organised by the Singapore Sports Council was held on 29-30 April 2000 at the Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre. The Convention was sponsored by NTUC Income and co-sponsored by Yakult Singapore and Raffles Medical Group/Raffles Surgicentre.

CONCERNING YOUR HEALTH WEBSITE

About 400 participants attended the bilingual public forum. Mr Tan Kin Lian, Chairman of the National Healthy Lifestyle Committee and CEO of NTUC Income was the Guest of Honour. At the Opening Ceremony, Mr Tan also launched the SMA

Website on "Concerning Your Health", a new addition to the SMA Website, http://www.sma.org.sg/concern_health that is specifically catered for the public. "Concerning Your Health" is the project of the SMA Community Health Education Committee headed by Dr Chow Wan Cheng.

There are two main sections to this website. A permanent section carries a list of common medical conditions affecting Singaporeans. Written by our medical colleagues, this section provides core information to those who need to better understand their own conditions or the conditions of their family members. In this way, the public will have a permanent reference to some of the common local medical conditions that can be accessed all the time. The number of topics will increase in subsequent editions. As the information is not meant to be exhaustive, hyperlinks to other relevant websites are also included to provide further information on the diseases. Other sections consist of a feature article / medical topic which will change quarterly. In this section, certain medical topics that are of current public interest will be discussed in detail.

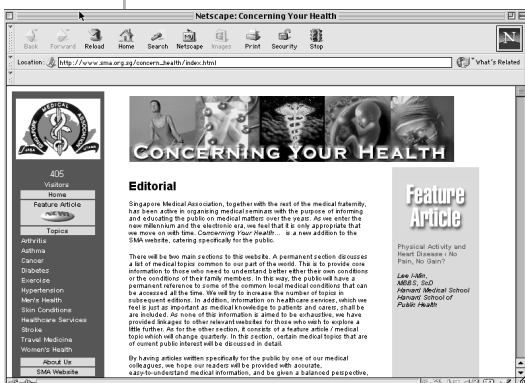
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

"Three-fifths of all adults in the United States do no physical activity at all, or engage in such activity only sporadically...

I don't think the situation is too different in Singapore," said Dr Lee I-Min. Quoting the latest studies conducted in the US, Dr Lee presented evidences which showed that physical activities, even in moderation, could: improve the quality of life, decrease the risk of developing colon cancer, decrease the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, decrease the risk of developing heart disease, add years to life. To motivate the participants to become physically active, she provided 4 easy principles as take home messages. They are:

1. Any physical activity is better than none
2. Engage in 30 minutes of moderate exercise, almost every day
3. Pick an activity that you like
4. Seek medical clearance before beginning an exercise programme if you are older than 40 for man or 50 for woman, or if you are unhealthy or at high risk for heart disease.

The other invited speakers for both the English and Chinese forums included Drs Chee Teck Siong, Patrick Goh, Wong Merng Koon, Wong Sweet Fun, Ian Leong, Yeo Chor Tzien, Chay Oh Moh, Mr Michael Chan and Mr Soon Min Yan, who covered topics ranging from the effects of exercise in the prevention and rehabilitation of common medical conditions, to sports facilities and services available to the public.



http://www.sma.org.sg/concern_health

DOCTORS' SYMPOSIUM ON "PRESCRIBING EXERCISE FOR YOUR PATIENT – DOING IT CORRECTLY"

The medical symposium was attended by more than 200 medical practitioners, nurses, physical fitness instructors and teachers. Dr Lee I-Min started the ball rolling by addressing some areas of controversy in the field of physical activity, fitness and health. First of all, she discussed the association between physical activities and the reduction of coronary heart disease rates. Dr Lee explained that the Harvard Alumni Health Study in men showed that with increasing physical activity, heart disease rates decline. Within each age group, the most active have about half the heart attack rates compared to the least active. The Nurses' Health Study published in 1999 also showed similar results in women.

Next, she posed the question of whether exercise has to be vigorous in intensity for benefit to accrue or will moderate activity such as brisk walking at 5-6km/hr suffice? Dr Lee revealed that a new physical activity guideline by the American College of Sports Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1995 called for the accumulation of at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise on most days of the week instead of the previous guideline which called for intense exercise, vigorous enough to work up a sweat, for at least 20 minutes continuously, 3 times a week. However, she pointed out that some studies showed that only vigorous activities conferred benefit, while others suggested that even moderate activities could help reduce risk of heart disease.

So what do you tell your patients? Dr Lee recommended that, "if you are completely sedentary, any physical activity is better than doing nothing. Start with a 10 or 15 minute walk each day. As you improve your physical fitness, build that up to 30 minutes, at least 5 days a week, and try to maintain a brisk pace (5-6 km/hr). Any activity that is equivalent in exertion to brisk walking will do. For those of you who

already are moderately active, taking up vigorous activities will confer additional benefits."

THE COMPLETE EXERCISE PROGRAMME, STAIR CLIMB TEST AND EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION

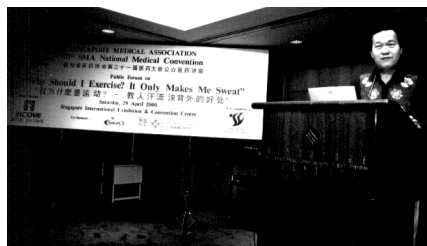
Another new trend in health and fitness is the shift from simply aerobic fitness to all-round fitness, according to Dr Benedict Tan, Assistant Director of Sports Medicine, SSC. He stressed the need of an exercise programme that delivers maximum results with a minimum time investment. Such a programme would include an aerobic activity, resistance training, and stretching.

SSC Sports Medicine Director, Dr Teh Kong Chuan shared with participants a stair-climb test using Singapore Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats he developed in

1999 to enable adult Singaporeans to assess their cardio-vascular fitness just next to their homes, as more than 80% of Singaporeans stay in HDB flats. STEPfit, or Self-Test Estimate of Physical Fitness would allow adult Singaporeans to assess their fitness conveniently on their own anytime they wish, and hopefully motivate them to exercise regularly.

Recommendations for the kind of exercises suitable for patients with chronic conditions like arthritis, diabetes, and for heart patients and the elderly were presented by A/Prof Fong Kok Yong, Dr Sum Chee Fang, Dr Johan Abdullah and Dr Pang Weng Sun respectively.

The SMA and the Singapore Sports Council are working on a guideline for prescribing exercises which will be published in a few months' time. The Convention souvenir magazines are also available at the SMA for those who have missed the Convention. ■



Clockwise from top left:

Mr Tan Kin Lian delivers the convention opening address.

Armchair aerobics led by fitness instructor, Knescenthia David.



Panelists of the Doctors' symposium (Left to right): Drs Lee I-Min, Benedict Tan, Teh Kang Chuan, Ivan Therathan, Johan Abdullah, Pang Weng Sun and Sum Chee Fang.

Dr Lee I-Min, the keynote speaker.