

The Year that has Been

The year past that has been was an eventful one. Many events were programmed ones. These were the proactive and empowerment activities that we chose to do. A number of the events were however, unpredicted ones. Fortunately, most of these were pleasant surprises or happy encounters. A few were ambushes.

In this President's Forum I have described the main highlights. I have grouped them under the headings of proactive, empowerment, and relational activities.

PROACTIVE ACTIVITIES

SMAPL

Your Council and its Committees have given time for developmental and proactive activities. The year saw the further development of the SMAPL. We now as a corporate body, own a property and its rental will contribute to the Association's revenue besides being an investment. Thanks are due to Dr Lim Teck Beng and his Committee.

CMEP

The Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism has been created to be a guiding light for the profession in terms of professionalism, ethics, laws and practice management. The Centre has been active under the dynamic leadership of Dr T Thirumoorthy and his directors.

I must put on record the contributions of Professor Tan Siang Yong, Professor of Medicine and Adjunct Professor of Law from the University of Hawaii; as well as Director, St Francis International Centre for Healthcare Ethics. He conducted a superb short course on health law and ethics and he is in the process of putting his lecture notes into a book. He is giving the publication rights to the SMA as a gift to the Singapore profession. We are indeed privileged to have Professor Tan as a strong supporter of the CMEP.

SMA Website

The SMA Website has seen major transformations under the hands of Miss Regina Chin, our Information Officer. If you have not visited the website yet, please do. It would be a rewarding experience. You can browse through the SMJ, SMA News online, the various pages of the CMEP, keep abreast of the CME activities of the Association and also see the membership offers for the month.

SMA Life

SMA Life is a new innovation to meet membership needs through the provision of privileged membership services. It is a platform that is web-based and supplemented by paper announcements.

We have offered cruises, computers and PDAs (personal digital assistants) at privileged prices. Regina and Krysania tell me that there are new services being lined up for the coming year: golf clinics, wine appreciation, language classes and more.

Strengthening our medico-legal defence

We worked to develop a good relationship with both the medical defence organizations to serve our members well. We are grateful to our legal advisors for their unstinted advice.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of the profession to practise with confidence is an important mission of the Association. The strategies are information, courses and timely advice.

Position statements and advisory notes

Your Council and the Ethics Committee have in the course of the year issued eight position statements and three advisory notes to guide members on practice. They were either posted on the SMA Website or published in the SMA News. For members' convenient reference, they have been included in the Annual Report. The eight position statements are on patient confidentiality, medical records, case management, dispensing, return of unused medicines, housecalls and "Who's Who".

Page 14 ►

41ST SMA COUNCIL

A/Prof Goh Lee Gan

President

Prof Low Cheng Hock

1st Vice President

Dr Lee Pheng Soon

2nd Vice President

Dr Yue Wai Mun

Honorary Secretary

Dr Chong Yeh Woei

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Dr Foo Chuan Kit

Dr Ivor Thevathasan

Dr Tan Chue Tin

Dr Tan Kok Soo

Dr Tan Yu Meng

Dr Tham Tat Yean

Dr Teoh Tiong Ann

Dr Wong Chiang Yin

42nd Council elected at AGM 8th April 2001

Prof Low Cheng Hock	President
Dr Lim Teck Beng	1 st Vice President
Dr Wong Chiang Yin	2 nd Vice President
Dr Yue Wai Mun	Honorary Secretary
Dr Chong Yeh Woei	Honorary Treasurer
Dr Tham Tat Yean	Honorary Assistant Secretary
Dr Tan Sze Wee	Honorary Assistant Treasurer

Other Members of 42nd Council

A/Prof Vivian Balakrishnan	Member
Dr Foo Chuan Kit	Member
A/Prof Goh Lee Gan	Member
Dr Lee Pheng Soon	Member
Dr Teoh Tiong Ann	Member
Dr Ivor Thevathasan	Member
Dr Tan Chue Tin	Member
Dr Toh Choon Lai	Member
Dr Theodor Wee Tit Gin	Member

◀ *Page 2 – The Year that has Been*

Courses

Computer literacy is important in the KBE (knowledge-based economy) that Singapore is moving into. Our computer classes have attracted 80 participants to learn how to surf the web and email. CMEP ran a course on practice management, rolled-out the first year bioethics seminars and ran the Medical Ethics Convention 2000. Another Medical Ethics Convention will be organized in November 2001 and Prof Tan will be conducting a course on ethics consultation in November too. This course is jointly organized by TTSH and CMEP.

SMJ

The SMJ is the Association's flagship publication. In the year under review, 148 articles were published. Much energy and effort have gone into the publication effort and thanks are due to Dr Rajasoorya, A/Prof Sonny Wang Yee Tang, members of the SMA Editorial Board, Dr Eileen Tham, Ms Chua Gek Eng and the numerous reviewers. All the articles are available on the web in a Portable Document Format (PDF).

SMA News

I would like to look at the SMA News as an instrument of empowerment too. In it, we keep the membership abreast of the

things, feelings and moods around us. The writers in the recent issue focused on narrative medicine, which certainly provided lots of food for thought on life, struggle and resilience. As members of the healing profession we need to heal ourselves too. Garfield is hilarious, wise and serious all at the same time. The ability to look at life and say it is funny despite the misery that it oftentimes inflict on us is an important survival skill. This is empowerment of ourselves.

Medical information in your palm

The latest empowerment that the SMA is working on with several younger members of the Profession is on the downloading of medical information and databases into Palm-Tops. We will truly have timely information right in our palms. I look forward to seeing the project come to fruition. With email and capabilities in the palm and other personal digital devices, the empowerment for each doctor for timely information and communication will be considerable.

RELATIONAL ACTIVITIES

SMA has been active in relating to organizations locally and in the region. A/Prof Cheong is the Secretary General of MASEAN. We hosted a working group to discuss the likely impact of free trade in

the region and steps to prepare ourselves for this global trend. Our Ministry of Health's papers were useful in providing the necessary background information.

We have good relationships with the major professional groups in Singapore through the IPPG (Inter-Professional Presidents' Group) and in particular with the Law Society of Singapore.

Relationship with the media has been good with all the media except the Straits Times. The latter seem to view us with different glasses from the rest of the media world. Two editorials made uncomplimentary and inaccurate remarks. I must thank Dr Wong Chiang Yin for his talent in drafting the replies.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The SMA needs to stay relevant. Together we need to provide the guiding light for the profession and to those whom we relate with in our daily professional lives. We will do our best.

The SMA Presidency is a baton relay. It is time for the next runner to move on. It has been a salutary experience to be given the opportunity to lead the Profession in the last two years. My special thanks go to the SMA Secretariat, Council Members and colleagues for their unstinted contributions, advice, encouragement and social support throughout the year. ■