

# Formation of New Statutory Boards

*The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) and Health Promotion Board (HPB) were established with effect from 1 April 2001. Dr Clarence Tan, the current Deputy Director of Medical Services (Health Sciences) in the Ministry, is the CEO of HSA. The CEO of HPB is Dr Lam Sian Lian, the current Deputy Director of Medical Services (Health Promotion) in the Ministry.*

## The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) *by Dr Clarence Tan*



*Dr Clarence Tan  
CEO, HSA*

### INTRODUCTION

At HSA, we play a vital role in supporting healthcare services and regulation, serving the administration of justice and enhancing safety in our community.

We are responsible for the quality, safety and efficacy of medicines, medical devices, radiation equipment, blood and its products and all health-related products available in Singapore. We provide a comprehensive regulatory service for the evaluation and marketing approval of all therapeutic products.

We also provide scientific, investigative and analytical support for vital governmental functions such as forensic expertise for the courts, drug and criminal investigations and the regulation of food safety and industrial and environmental health.

We are established by the integration of 5 highly specialized departments under the Ministry of Health, namely the Centre for Drug Evaluation, Institute of Science and Forensic Medicine, National Pharmaceutical Administration, Product Regulation Department and Singapore Blood Transfusion Service. Today, as a single authority, HSA builds on the existing strengths and achievements by enhancing the management autonomy and scientific synergy of these five departments.

HSA continues to provide the full spectrum of services and products previously offered by our predecessors, hand-in-hand with a heritage of excellence that places us among the foremost public health agencies in the region.

**VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES:** Our vision is "To be world-class for scientific and regulatory expertise in Health Sciences".

Our mission is "To excel in applying science to support healthcare services and regulation, serve the administration of justice and enhance safety in our community".

HSA's objectives cover two broad areas. Firstly, HSA serves as the national regulatory

agency to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of medicines, medical devices, radiation equipment, blood and its products and all health-related products that are available in Singapore. Secondly, HSA provides specialized scientific, investigative and analytical support for vital governmental functions such as forensic expertise for the courts, drug and criminal investigations and the regulation of food safety and industrial and environmental health. These specialized services are also available to the private sector.

The professional expertise of HSA is organised into eight professional Centres:

- Centre for Pharmaceutical Administration
- Centre for Drug Evaluation
- Centre for Radiation Protection
- Centre for Medical Device Regulation
- Centre for Transfusion Medicine
- Centre for Forensic Medicine
- Centre for Forensic Science
- Centre for Analytical Science

### NEW AREAS COVERED AND FEATURES OF THE NEW STRUCTURE:

HSA faces the enormous challenge posed today by the biomedical sciences and the blurring of boundaries between healthcare products resulting from increasing convergence in the application of medical technology.

The formation of HSA results in a larger and stronger critical core of medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise to provide the synergy for professional and regulatory excellence. This enhances our ability to develop new capabilities to respond to future needs, for example in molecular biology, genetics, toxicology and pre-clinical evaluation. Combining the professional strengths in HSA ensures that Singapore continues to have a capable and credible regulatory agency that is able to rigorously evaluate and approve new and

innovative healthcare products of the future.

The formation of HSA also results in a comprehensive one-stop regulatory agency, which will administer a seamless regulatory process for all healthcare products. As a multi-disciplinary agency, we can and will deliver a well-coordinated regulatory process efficiently and effectively. The medical and pharmaceutical industry now only needs to interact with a single agency which has the full range of professional expertise necessary to evaluate and approve its product.

### IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES AND FOCUS:

- a. **Building Talent:** HSA will invest in talent development and be able to recruit a fair share of the best medical, pharmaceutical and scientific talents both locally and abroad. To be a competitive and value-added employer, we will place a premium on professional training and development and develop strong professional links with leading centres overseas.
- b. **Affordability of drugs:** MOH has set up a multi-disciplinary committee to review the prescription drug situation in Singapore and to recommend the policies, practices and processes that will be necessary to ensure drug costs continue to remain affordable for all Singaporeans. HSA will be at the forefront of the review and will create an open regulatory environment that will allow Singaporeans to have access to the latest drugs at competitive prices.
- c. **Global Perspective:** HSA will continue to participate actively in regional and international initiatives to contribute as a global player so as to achieve higher medical, pharmaceutical and scientific safety.
- d. **Public Confidence:** HSA will need to actively foster strong public confidence in its regulatory decisions and scientific

# The Health Promotion Board (HPB) *by Dr Lam Sian Lian*

**VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES:**  
The vision of the Health Promotion Board (HPB) is a nation of healthy and fit Singaporeans.

Our mission is:

- To empower Singaporeans to achieve optimal health throughout life.
- To ensure accessibility to health information and preventive health services.
- To collaborate with public, private and community organisations to facilitate health promotion and provide health education.
- To promote a conducive environment for healthy lifestyle practices.
- To be a centre of excellence for health promotion.

The functions of the Board are:

- a) to advise the government on all matters connected with the promotion of good health and healthy lifestyles amongst the people of Singapore;
- b) to organise and implement effective health education programmes and other activities to promote good health and healthy lifestyles and to prevent and detect diseases;
- c) to determine, establish and recommend standards and guidelines on diet and nutrition to encourage healthy eating habits;
- d) to provide medical, dental, health screening and immunisation services to school children and other population groups.

## NEW AREAS COVERED AND FEATURES OF THE NEW STRUCTURE:

The Health Promotion Board integrates five departments in the Ministry of Health, namely the National Health Education

Department, Department of Nutrition, School Health Service, School Dental Service and Health Promotion Division Administration. The Board will provide the framework for a greater focus on major health problems faced by children, adults and the elderly in Singapore, spearhead health education, promotion and prevention programmes and create a health-supportive environment.

HPB will build on the strong foundation of health promotion and disease prevention that has been laid by MOH by strengthening existing programmes as well as by introducing new ones. The new programmes will include the Secondary School Dental Programme, Myopia Prevention Programme, Health Promoting School Award Scheme, population-wide breast cancer and cervical cancer screening and the Osteoporosis Programme.

## IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES AND FOCUS:

The goal of HPB's programmes is to prevent disease, reduce ill health and disability and enable Singaporeans to stay healthy for as long as possible. The aims are for children to be born healthy, remain healthy throughout their school years to enable them to take full advantage of the education system; adults to be healthy, fit and productive, and the elderly to be active and independent for as long as possible. Immediate priorities include:

- Preventing onset and progression of myopia especially in children.
- Ensuring that the obesity levels in children do not increase.
- Educating our young on the importance of health and a healthy lifestyle so as to prevent lifestyle diseases.
- Encouraging working adults and older people to adopt healthier lifestyles

so that they will not succumb to debilitating diseases prematurely that will lower the quality of their lives and be a drain on the national healthcare system.

- Helping older people to age well by minimising the risks of diseases and disability, and maintaining physical and mental functions.
- Increasing awareness on the importance of regular screening for specific conditions so that health problems can be detected early.

HPB will collaborate with public, private and community organisations to develop and sustain national efforts to promote health. HPB will reach out to Singaporeans in various settings and reinforce the health messages in many different ways. The Board will also focus on outcomes and standards and provide the impetus to ensure that results especially in problem areas are achieved.

## RELATIONSHIP AND INTERACTION WITH MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN VARIOUS SECTORS:

Medical practitioners have a very important role in health promotion and disease prevention. Singaporeans respect their doctor and will listen to and do what their doctor advises.

Medical practitioners are important partners of HPB in health promotion. We will work with them on health promotion and disease prevention projects and assist and support them in their efforts in health promotion. We have a Health Information Centre at the Board's premises. We welcome all medical practitioners to visit the centre and make use of the facilities and materials available. ■



*Dr Lam Sian Lian  
CEO, HPB*

◀ Page 10 – Health Sciences Authority (HSA) expertise by demonstrating competency, objectivity and transparency in the way it operates.

## RELATIONSHIP AND INTERACTION WITH MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN VARIOUS SECTORS:

In our role as regulator of healthcare

products, HSA recognises the important partnership of medical practitioners in our mission to ensure the safe and appropriate use of products that are available. HSA would like to explore how this partnership can be strengthened. For example, in the area of post-marketing surveillance, HSA would like to strengthen the reporting of adverse drug reactions and the effective

dissemination of such reports to all doctors. In our development of pharmacoeconomics, we intend to provide doctors with cost-comparison information that will help in making appropriate and cost-effective prescribing decisions for patients. HSA will be happy to work with SMA in forging such partnerships with the medical profession. ■