



Prof Low Cheng Hock

The Challenges in the Year Ahead

“WE MUST WORK AS A TEAM FOR ALL SINGAPOREANS’, and if I may add, for all people living in Singapore.”

Firstly we must thank the previous SMA Council for laying the road-map for the coming year. We would also like to thank our members for their kind understanding and patience in our efforts to serve our patients and our profession in the best possible way.

The year ahead promises to be challenging and demanding. There are many issues the medical profession is faced with, among these are:

1. Continuing Medical Education (CME)

CME will be implemented as a compulsory programme soon. Let us look at this as an opportunity to constantly upgrade our knowledge and skills, so that we can better serve our patients. SMA through CME committee of SMC will try to make the system easy to administer. With the use of IT innovations, the system can be made convenient for all doctors.

2. Ethical Issues

Many ethical issues will surface: problems of life-and-death situations, cloning, biological manipulation, to name but a few, will be more than thought provoking. The SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism (CMEP) will have to plan courses, seminars, instructional updates and other programmes to better equip our members to face the immediate future.

3. Healthcare Cost/Drug Cost

The issue of healthcare cost of which drug cost is an important component, is of paramount importance. We are happy that the Minister has appointed

a committee to look at drug cost and its implications. We are confident the Committee will look at the problems from all angles. Initiatives that will cut healthcare costs without lowering the standards of healthcare and patient benefits will be most welcomed.

SMA has a guideline on dispensing fees issued in November 1998. Although not mandatory, we recommend that our doctors keep within these guidelines as far as possible, so as to control drug cost, and indirectly healthcare cost.

Mr Chan Soo Sen in his address to the SMA on its Installation Night, concluded with this all important message “Let’s work as a team for Singaporeans!” This is such an important call that I would like to repeat it: In the healthcare scene, ‘WE MUST WORK AS A TEAM FOR ALL SINGAPOREANS’, and if I may add, for all people living in Singapore.

Goh Lee Gan tells me that his father advised him that a good presentation must have only three points. Well, my three points are: (1) we should co-operate; (2) we need to co-operate; and (3) we must co-operate - for the sake of our patients, for the good of our profession, and for the health of our country.

In the coming years, SMA will endeavour to work closely with our sister organisations, our colleagues in the other professions, the Consumers Association, the media, MOH, the University, NHG, SingHealth and all healthcare providers to ensure that Mr Chan’s words will always be resounding. Let us work as a team.

SMA will strive to work closely with both the public and private sectors so

that good healthcare will have no borders, and patient benefits will have no boundaries. We will strive to co-operate with SingHealth, NHG and all practitioners to improve the quality of the healthcare system. In particular, SMA and its members will endeavour to collaborate with the Clusters in the areas of Disease Management programmes, shared care and step-down programmes. Joint patient-care and a smooth flow within our healthcare system will ultimately benefit our patients.

We are glad that we have gathered a team of dedicated Council Members from a wide spectrum of medical professionals. The Council has already started working hard to look at programmes that will enhance the education, knowledge and skills for our members, and also to promote programmes that will serve our patients better in both curative and preventive medicine.

Problems there are, and problems there will always be. But let us look at problems as experiences, experiences as challenges, and challenges as the source of our strength.

As they say ‘In the Stage of Life, there is no rehearsal’. So let us all, healthcare providers all, hold each other’s hands and move forward as a team to build a healthy nation. Together we will build a safe and clean environment. Together we will build a healthcare system that is cost-effective, efficient and of high quality and standards.

Not only will we strive to increase the longevity in life, but also the quality of living. We will try to add not only years to life, but also life to the years added. ■

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