

Editor's Note:

In the article "Getting to the Bottom of Rising Health-Care Costs" which appeared in the Straits Times on 8 September 2001, the ST Health Correspondent Ms Salma Khalik, attributed the cause of increasing medical bills to "higher wages and improvements in medical treatments". She went on to examine the 3 components of healthcare costs, namely hospitalisation, long-term medication and long-term care.

The following letter by Dr Tan Wah Tze was originally sent to the Forum Page, Straits Times, and copied to SMA. To-date, it has not been published in ST. The SMA News is publishing Dr Tan's letter for our readers' information.

Dr Tan (MBBS, Singapore 1998) is currently a Medical Officer with the National Healthcare Group.

TO: EDITOR, FORUM PAGE, THE STRAITS TIMES

As a practising doctor in the public healthcare sector, I take great offense in the article "Getting to the bottom of rising healthcare costs" by Salma Khalik (ST 8 Sep 2001).

Your writer seems to imply that paying doctors and nurses their well-deserved wages is the root of the problem.

Quote from the article:

"So what accounts for the rising costs? Point the finger at higher wages and improvements in medical treatments. Last year, doctors' salaries went up by an average of 22 percent, while those of nurses rose by 10 to 21 percent. Wages account for 60 percent of operating costs, with medical supplies such as drugs taking up 15 percent."

Please be aware that doctors and nurses are not the only salaried people working in the public healthcare sector. To solely pinpoint doctors and nurses for blame is unfair.

I feel that the rising healthcare cost issue is complex and multi-factorial. Simplistic finger pointing will not solve the problem.

REGARDS,

