

News from SMA Council

By Dr Tham Tat Yean, Honorary Secretary

1. DIALOGUE SESSION WITH UMP MEMBERS

The SMA Council has recently received a letter from a group of UMP members who have raised various pertinent points of concern regarding UMP's provisional liquidation.

The SMA Council had then arranged for a preliminary meeting with representatives from the group on Monday, 12 August. It was a fruitful discussion which enabled both sides to have a better understanding of the issues involved. The Council followed up with a reply dated 20 August to the group and all other UMP members.

The SMA Council also held a dialogue session with UMP members on Sunday, 1 September, from 1.30 – 5.00 pm, at the Alumni Auditorium. Dr Balaji Sadasivan, Minister of State for Health and Environment presented the MOH position on the UMP issue. He also had a brief discussion with members on issues related to medical indemnity in Singapore. The session allowed UMP members to seek clarifications, give feedback and suggestions, and explore various options with the Council.

Members who were unable to attend the session can look out for the minutes and proceedings of the dialogue session, which will be circulated in due course. A report on the session will also be published in the next issue of the SMA News.

2. DOCTORS PARTICIPATING IN PROMOTION OF VITAMINS, TONICS, HEALTH AND NUTRITION SUPPLEMENTS

In response to queries from several Members, the SMA Ethics Committee has consulted the SMC who has advised as follows:

a. "Doctors may participate in promotions of vitamins, tonics, health and nutrition supplements provided that whatever they say, write or broadcast in this connection is supportable by good quality scientific evidence. This would reasonably entail published articles

in reputable medical journals on the results of research or clinical trials carried out on the product."

- b. "A doctor who gives public talks or writes in the public media about vitamins, tonics, etc, is reasonably expected to disclose the known risks and benefits of the product concerned. He/she who is sponsored by a company to participate in an educational event must declare all such potential conflicts of interest to the audience. The doctor shall ensure that his participation does not occur in such a way as to appear to endorse such products or to persuade members of the public to use the products."
- c. "In addition, the information provided to the public by the doctor shall have the following standards:
- factual
 - accurate
 - verifiable
 - no extravagant claims
 - not misleading
 - not sensational
 - not persuasive
 - not laudatory
 - not comparative
 - not disparaging"

The SMC has further clarified that:

- i. "'Good quality scientific evidence' in paragraph 4.5.2 of the SMC Ethical Code, reasonably entails published articles in reputable medical journals on the results of research or clinical trials carried out on the product."
- ii. "A doctor is reasonably expected to disclose the known risks and benefits of the product, and must declare any potential conflicts of interest. He/she must not appear to endorse such products or persuade the public to use the products."
- iii. "In addition, the doctor must ensure that the information provided is factual, accurate, verifiable, has no extravagant claims, not misleading, not sensational, not persuasive, not laudatory, not comparative and not disparaging."

3. SMC ONLINE CME SYSTEM

Members who do not have internet access and wish to submit their CME claims electronically through SMA, are reminded to do so as soon as possible. We will assist Members for the following categories:

Category IC Overseas Conferences and Seminars

Category II Publication of Original Papers

Category III Self Study

As it will not be possible to update records for the year 2002 after 31 December 2002, we would like to request that Members submit their log sheets (available in the SMC Online CME System booklet) to the SMA Secretariat by **7 December 2002** at the latest. It is also necessary to provide us with your MCR number and login password. Steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of passwords. If you do not have your password, please check with the **SMC CME Secretariat at Tel: 6372 3060**.

Please note that hard copies of your attendance records for overseas conferences must be kept until 1 July of the following year. The SMC CME Secretariat may request for these records during periodic audits.

4. GREAT EASTERN (GE) INSURANCE

With effect from 1 September 2002 onwards, clinics that do not instruct GE by 31 August 2002 to lapse their policies will be renewed automatically according to existing data. There is no need to sign a renewal form. If there are any changes, clinics should inform GE in writing (for employee movements, please contact Resan from the SMA Secretariat at Tel: 6223 1264). Otherwise, any claims beyond the existing coverage will not be valid.

GE will send renewal invoices to the clinics by 31 September 2002. Premium payments must be paid within 30 days from the date of invoice, or the policy will be considered to have lapsed. ■