

# News from SMA Council

By Dr Tham Tat Yeap, Honorary Secretary

## 1. 44<sup>TH</sup> SMA COUNCIL

We are pleased to announce that the following Council Members have been elected to the 44<sup>th</sup> SMA Council. The installation ceremony will be held on a later date.

*President:* Dr Lee Pheng Soon

*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:* Dr Wong Chiang Yin

*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:* Dr Toh Choon Lai

*Honorary Secretary:* Dr Tham Tat Yeap

*Honorary Asst. Secretary:* Dr Foo Chuan Kit

*Honorary Treasurer:* Dr Tan Sze Wee

*Honorary Asst. Treasurer:* Dr Chong Yeh Woei

*Council Members:* Dr John Chiam Yih Hsing

Dr Chin Jing Jih

Prof Low Cheng Hock

Dr Soh Wah Ngee

Dr Tan Chue Tin

Dr Tan Kok Leong

Dr Ivor Thevathasan

Dr Wong Tien Yin

Dr Yue Wai Mun

## 3. SMA CONSTITUTION

### AMENDMENTS

In view of the lack of quorum at the post-poned AGM, the proposed amendments to the SMA Constitution were not discussed.

## 4. MEDICAL PROTECTION SOCIETY (MPS)

The SMA Council is pleased to announce that it has just renewed the cooperation agreement with the MPS. SMA will receive a **fixed commission of \$100** for each member joining and renewing from **1 March 2003 onwards**.

MPS has a specified appointment membership scheme, covering some 900 HOs, MOs and Registrars, with one of the healthcare Clusters. This scheme is handled directly by the MPS Membership Department in Leeds, and does not come under the SMA-MPS Cooperation Agreement.

## 5. COURT ATTENDANCE

Recently, a Member who is in private practice was summoned by the police to be on standby as a professional witness. He sought advice on whether he would be paid in the event he was not called to give evidence, and whether he would be compensated for engaging a locum so as to enable him to be available to attend the hearing, when required.

Our Honorary Legal Advisor has advised as follows:

- i. The SMA Guideline on Court Attendance Fees does not apply to a doctor who receives a subpoena from the police to be a court witness (presumably for a criminal case or a Coroner's Inquiry).
- ii. When subpoenaed by the police, a Court Attendance Allowance will only be paid if the witness were called to give evidence.

- iii. Under the Criminal Procedure Code (Witnesses' Allowances) Rules, which has been in effect since 1 July 1998, the general guidelines are that 1/50<sup>th</sup> of the monthly earned income may be payable for each half-day of court attendance, subject to a maximum of \$350 for that half-day (Clauses 3 and 5). Presumably, the monthly earned income would be gauged from income tax returns.
- iv. Transport allowance may also be allowed for each day's attendance in court. This will be a fixed sum, not exceeding \$20 (Clause 8).
- v. The doctor concerned who is summoned to be a court witness is doing a public duty in the administration of criminal justice. Hence, the Government cannot be expected to take into account whether a locum is required or not, and how expensive it would be.
- vi. By asking a doctor to "standby", the police are doing him a favour by allowing him to stay in his clinic, and they would usually telephone him an hour or so ahead if he were needed to attend court.
- vii. The same arrangements made with private counsel, with regard to court attendance, can also be made with the police. The Investigating Officer will oblige the doctor as much as possible and will indicate the day (or half day) when he would be required to attend court, even if the trial or inquiry may last several days.

Hence, doctors who have been summoned can contact the Investigating Officer to narrow down the "standby" period, and to arrange for a telephone call to be made before he would be actually stepping into the witness box.

## 43<sup>RD</sup> SMA COUNCIL

**Prof Low Cheng Hock**

President

**Dr Lim Teck Beng**

1st Vice President

**Dr Wong Chiang Yin**

2nd Vice President

**Dr Tham Tat Yeap**

Honorary Secretary

**Dr Tan Sze Wee**

Honorary Treasurer

**Dr Toh Choon Lai**

Honorary Asst Secretary

**Dr Chong Yeh Woei**

Honorary Asst Treasurer

Members

**Dr Chin Jing Jih**

**Dr Foo Chuan Kit**

**Dr Lee Pheng Soon**

**Dr Ivor Thevathasan**

**Dr Tan Chue Tin**

**Dr Tan Kok Leong**

**Dr Theodor Wee Tit Gin**

**Dr Wong Tien Yin**

**Dr Yue Wai Mun**

We wish to welcome our 2 new Council Members, **Dr John Chiam Yih Hsing (MBBS, 1998)** and **Dr Soh Wah Ngee (MBBS, 1991)**. Dr Chiam is a Registrar at Internal Medicine, SGH. He is also Vice-Chairman of the SMA Medical Informatics Committee (2001 – to date) and a Member of the SMA News Editorial Board (2002 – to date). Dr Soh is a family physician with Silver Cross Medical Centre. He serves as a Member on the SMA Complaints Committee (2002 – to date).

We also wish to express our deepest appreciation to **Dr Lim Teck Beng** and **Dr Theodor Wee Tit Gin** who have retired from the SMA Council, for their valuable contributions to SMA.

## 2. SMA HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

We are pleased to announce that Dr Chen Ai Ju was elected to the SMA Honorary Membership at the 43<sup>rd</sup> SMA AGM in accordance with Article IV Section (iv) of the SMA Constitution.

***Note: The Best Practices Guidelines issued jointly by the Law Society of Singapore and Singapore Medical Association in January 2000, stipulates the SMA Guideline on Court Attendance and Preparation Fees 2000 only affects the conduct of civil litigation.***

## **6. ONLINE CME PROGRAMMES**

The SMA Council is currently in discussions with the MOH Clinical

Standards and Technology Assessment Branch, which deals with the development of Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs), to collaborate on online CME programmes. These CPGs are already available for downloading from the MOH website and doctors can claim CME credit for reading CPGs (like reading journal articles).

We are looking into using the MOH CPG content for SMA's online CME programmes. We will continue to keep SMA Members informed on this.

## **7. CLARIFICATION ON REPORT IN THE NEW PAPER**

In the article "Doctors under examination – specialists make big bucks", which was published in The New Paper on 14 February 2003, it was reported that some specialists can "*easily make up to \$800,000 a month*" and "*... \$90,000 for a day's work...*"

The SMA Council has written to the reporter concerned to seek clarifications on the figures published in the particular report. However, the reporter did not agree to furnish further information to validate his claims. ■