

News from SMA Council

By Dr Tham Tat Yean, Honorary Secretary

1. UPCOMING SMA EVENTS

SMA Medical & Ethics Convention 2003

Date: 1 & 2 Nov 2003 (Sat & Sun)

SMA Lecture 2003

Date: 1 Nov 2003 (Sat)

The SMA Lecturer 2003 is Dr Lee Suan Yew, President, Singapore Medical Council. Dr Lee will speak on "Judicious Approach in Medical Practice".

SMA Annual Dinner 2003

Date: 17 Nov 2003 (Sun)

All events will be held at the Suntec Singapore. For more programme details, please turn to page 8 and 9, and look out for this month's mailers.

2. SMA LIFE MEMBERSHIP

We would like to draw Members' attention to Article III, Section ii of the SMA Constitution, which states that

"Life membership may be granted to:

- a. **Ordinary Members who have been in continuous membership for at least five years, who have reached the age of 55 years and who have retired from active professional practice in Singapore; &**
- b. **Ordinary Members who have been in continuous membership for at least ten years, on payment of a sum equivalent to ten years' annual subscription at Ordinary rate."**

Ordinary Members who are eligible to apply for Life Membership can write in to the SMA Council.

CLARIFICATION ON PRESS COMMENT

In the Straits Times report "Health care here of good value, thanks to public hospitals", on 4 September 2003, Prof Ramesh, a Senior Fellow at NUS who recently published a research paper on medical costs in Singapore, Hong Kong Taiwan and South Korea, was quoted as saying "that when a large part of health-care costs is paid for by insurance, it 'severely undermines' attempts to contain costs". Health economist Phua Kai Hong, another associate professor at NUS, was quoted as agreeing that 'third-party reimbursement systems like insurance... lead to excessive consumption'. It then went on to quote Mr Tan Kin Lian, CEO of NTUC Income Insurance Cooperative Ltd as agreeing and saying that "Some doctors or hospitals find out how much is covered by the health insurance policy, and jack up their bills to claim the full amount... If the patient does not have insurance, then they may charge a lower rate."

The SMA Council has sought clarification with Mr Tan, has since clarified on 1 September 2003 that

"My remarks on billings by hospitals and doctors for patients covered by insurance relate to the practice in some countries, where medical cost went out of control. They are not directed to the practice in Singapore, where the medical cost is under better control." ■