

News from SMA Council

By Dr Tham Tat Yean, Honorary Secretary

1. SHARING HEALTHCARE CONCERNS WITH THE NEW MINISTER

The SMA Council met with the Acting Minister of Health, Mr Khaw Boon Wan, on 26 September 2003. During the meeting, the SMA Council expressed its support for the Ministry's eight priorities: building a healthy population, managing diseases, exploiting IT, countering disease outbreak, managing healthcare inflation, ensuring long-term healthcare financing, safeguarding medical standards, and exploiting economic value as a regional medical hub.

The SMA Council also brought up additional concerns that it thought were important to address: PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) stockpiling, future of medical indemnity, medical tourism and public-private sector collaboration.

This was a timely get-to-know-you session, which also allowed the Minister and the SMA Council to reaffirm shared values, offer insights and feedback from the ground, and to see how the SMA could be partners with the Ministry in its vision. The SMA Council looks forward to strengthening and continuing its close working relationship with the Minister and his Ministry.

2. PRESCRIBING COUGH MIXTURES CONTAINING CODEINE

In light of a recent case in the newspapers, the SMA wrote to the Centre for Pharmaceutical Administration (CPA), Health Sciences Authority (HSA), to seek clarification on the legal obligation of the doctor in prescribing cough mixtures containing codeine.

CPA replied as follows:

"Cough mixtures containing codeine are usually not controlled as prescription medicines. In July 1996, the Ministry's Pharmaceutical Department (at that time) had imposed licensing conditions on all retail pharmacists holding Form C Poisons Licences to restrict the sales of such cough mixtures. Some of these restrictive measures included limiting sale to a maximum of 240ml (2 x 120 ml bottles) per customer, and no sale to the same customer within four days whenever possible."

"The above measures do not apply directly to doctors by virtue of the fact that doctors are not licensed under the Poisons Act. However, as advised by the Ministry of Health in its circular dated 9 October 2000, it would be advisable for doctors practising in a primary care setting to similarly exercise restraint in the supply of such cough mixtures in accordance with their professional judgement."



Left to right: Prof & Mrs Wes Fabb, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, and Dr Richard Geeves at the RACGP Convocation Ceremony in Hobart, Tasmania on 8 Oct 2003.

A/PROF GOH LEE GAN awarded Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)

A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, Past President, Singapore Medical Association (SMA) (1999 – 2000) and Editor of SMA News (1983 – 1998) was awarded the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) in a Convocation Ceremony held in Hobart, Tasmania on 8 October 2003. A/Prof Goh, who is presently the President of the Asian-Pacific region of WONCA, the world organisation of family doctors and the Censor-in-Chief of the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS), was honoured for his outstanding achievements in the world stage and also for developing the close ties between the Australian and Singapore Colleges. The last Singapore doctor so honoured by RACGP was Past President of CFPS, Dr Wong Heck Sing, 30 years ago.

Also honoured at the ceremony with life fellowships were Prof Wes Fabb, past CEO of WONCA, and Dr Richard Geeves, past Censor-in-Chief of RACGP. They were the external examiners in the first Diplomate Membership (MCGP) examination conducted by CFPS, a year soon after its inception in 1971. Gifts were also exchanged between Prof Michael Kidd, President of RACGP and A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, President of CFPS, to commemorate three decades of close ties between the two Colleges.

The SMA Council and the SMA News Editorial Board congratulate A/Prof Goh Lee Gan for bringing honour to the medical fraternity in Singapore with this award. A/Prof Goh also holds honorary fellowships from WONCA and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP).

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3. SMC ONLINE CME SYSTEM

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

Category 1C – Overseas conferences and seminars

Category 2 – Publication of original papers

Category 3A – Self study

Members are requested to submit your log sheets (available in the SMC Online CME System booklet) to the SMA Secretariat. 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. ■