

# Embracing Different Voices

By Dr Toh Han Chong, Editor

It is my privilege to accept the helm of the *SMA News* from Dr Wong Tien Yin, who has been conferred a tenured academic position in Melbourne, Australia. We wish him well. Dr Wong has been an able editor of the *SMA News* in one of the most challenging times in the history of Singapore medicine. The dissemination of information to the medical community and the reporting of the SARS epidemic was an important focus of the *SMA News* last year. We also extend our appreciation to eye specialist Dr Jon Goh who has given his valuable time and energy to the *SMA News* and now retires from the Editorial Board.

**Dr Daniel Fung**, intrepid child psychiatrist, father of five and wordsmith extraordinaire, remains as Deputy Editor in spite of his busy schedule. General practitioner **Dr Chan Kah Poon**, long-serving Editorial Board Member of almost two decades, will continue to share his wisdom and thoughts on medical practice. The inimitable **Professor Chee Yam Cheng** will still inspire in the Editorial Board, with his understanding of the Singapore medical landscape, and his wisdom on the art of practising medicine. His now legendary SARS chronicles, giving a timely on-hand account of all aspects of SARS in Singapore and beyond, are a lasting historical legacy. In this issue of the *SMA News*, we publish his SARS epilogue with bittersweet feelings, like bidding goodbye in the last episode of the TV sitcom *Friends*, or for the older doctors, the concluding episode of that historical 1960s TV drama, *Peyton Place*. One thing is for sure, nobody wishes for SARS to return. **Dr John Chiam** promises more of his fire-in-the-belly reflections on medical issues from his vantage point at the Jurong Polyclinic. **Dr Terence Lim** (National University Hospital) and **Dr Oh Jen Jen** (KK Women's and Children's Hospital) continue as prolific Editorial Board Members in conveying the angst and zeitgeist of Generation X doctors. General practitioner **Dr Tan Poh Kiang** brings to the Editorial Board, a humanism with his well-told reality-check accounts of practising medicine in the heartland. His portrayal of the day-to-day challenges he and his patients face is reminiscent of the writings of another great medical writer, Dr AJ Cronin.

We welcome two new Editorial Board Members, **Dr Lee Chung Horn**, a consultant endocrinologist at the Gleneagles Medical Centre, and **Dr Jeremy Lim**, a trained surgeon and



newly appointed Acting Head, Prevention, at the National Kidney Foundation. A seasoned writer and orator from school days, Dr Lee is also a happening music journalist covering mainly the Indie music scene for the *Big O* and international music magazines. Dr Lim, a recent Fulbright scholar who obtained a Masters in Public Health at the Johns Hopkins University, brings to the table a keen eye for public health development and policy issues, having been involved in health development work both locally and overseas. His inaugural article in this issue of the *SMA News* is on medical clusters. He asks some important questions and hopes to provoke a response from the ground up. Medical clusters were created with the good intent to incubate competition under controlled temperatures and to streamline healthcare. But can the artificial carving out of two tribes on a small island unbalance an ideal ecosystem for both patients and healthcare providers? Could medical clustering invoke the TV show *Survivor* mantra to outwit, outplay and outlast each other, and potentially detract from providing optimal health for a nation even? Read Dr Lim's article to find out.

*SMA News* would be the lesser without the voices of **Garfield** and the **Hobbit**, both primary healthcare physicians from the heartland. Garfield will continue to grace these pages, with his perennial and enjoyable column infused with humour and insight. The Hobbit offers uncannily accurate and often in-your-face commentaries of the current issues related to Singapore medicine today. Indeed, the Hobbit is the Simon Cowell (*American Idol* judge) of the *SMA News*.

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In the new year, the *SMA News* promises to inject new ideas, greater readability, and will continue to provide important current information from the SMA. We warmly invite all health professionals to contribute their thoughts, poems and photographs, be it concerns of a solo GP practice, the travails of junior doctors at work, health policy issues, or interesting medical anecdotes. Formerly known as *Materia non Medica*, we have reintroduced this column as *Got A Life* and will highlight interesting hobbies and talents of our medical fraternity, be it collecting comics or rare insects, lindy-hopping or singing in the shower. Theme issues will remain a feature of the *SMA News*. Our first theme issue this year will be on *Women in Medicine*.

This upcoming issue will look at the roles, challenges, concerns and strengths of women in the healing profession, past, present and future. We very much look forward to contributions for this theme issue.

Doctors are ideologues, free market followers, social activists and scholars mixed in a heady blend, which makes for a unique cocktail. With all the potentially subjective ideological, social, political, clinical, scientific and financial viewpoints that can surround the simple maxim of “doing good”, it is still a profession that aims to heal the Other and also to heal Thyself. The *SMA News* aims to provide an objective platform to embrace this diversity of medical voices. The pen must be mightier than the sword in a clash of ideologies. Otherwise, life will become cheap. ■