

## BURSARY DISBURSEMENT 2021

# Against All Odds

Text and photo by Sara Kwok, Executive, SMA Charity Fund



On 2 August 2021, we opened our bursary portal to receive applications for the SMA Medical Students' Assistance Fund (SMA-MSAF) bursary.

In total, we received 86 applications from students of our three local medical schools. Many were heartfelt pleas for support during a year when Singaporeans were still struggling with the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

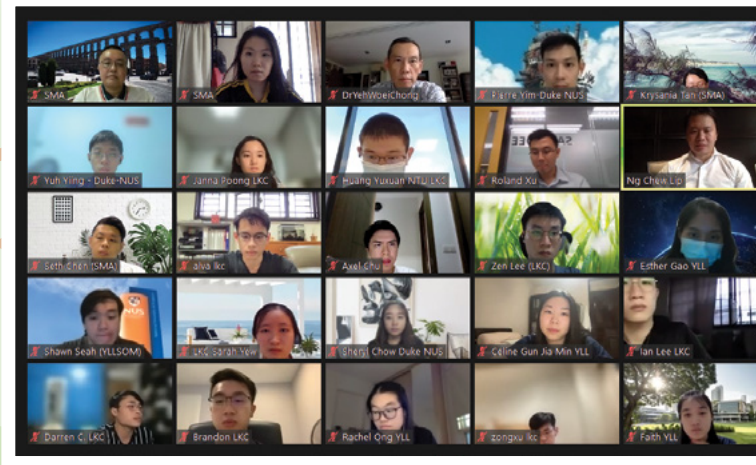
Despite it being a tumultuous year, SMA Charity Fund (SMACF) was able to support a total of 57 medical students with the SMA-MSAF bursaries this year. Due to safe management measures, we met up with our bursary recipients virtually with the event graced by SMACF Chairman Dr Chong Yeh Woei, Board member Dr Roland Xu, as well as SMA President Dr Tan Yia Swam and Council members, Dr Ng Chew Lip and Dr Benny Loo.

The event began with Dr Chong giving a warm welcome to the bursary recipients and acknowledging familiar faces who had participated in last year's virtual event. Dr Chong shared about the background of SMACF as well as the main purpose of the bursary fund, which was to provide a helping hand with the living expenses of our recipients. In his opening address, he also paid tribute to the unity of the medical community, among whom are many of our loyal donors who have helped us on our journey as a charity fund thus far. Dr Xu, a past recipient of the SMA-MSAF bursary, also shared some of his past experiences as a medical student. He assured the students that tough times don't last, and if anything, his past circumstances have benefitted

him immensely as a doctor, enabling him to relate empathetically with his patients' concerns today.

The Council members also took their turns to speak with the students. Dr Tan shared some of the perks of being a Council member for the past 16 years, and how SMA has played a major role in her medical career and getting her to where she is today – the first female president of SMA and a Nominated Member of Parliament. She urged the recipients to contact SMA should they ever need any assistance on their medical journey and extended an invitation to them to consider joining the Council in future. She ended her speech by reminding recipients that studying medicine is a calling and though the road ahead may be a challenging one, they should never forget their purpose in pursuing medicine as a career.

Dr Ng, who was part of a team of medical students who conducted the survey on medical students' living expenses leading to the eventual formation of SMACF, and Dr Loo both urged the recipients to consider giving back in ways they can to help those in need. Dr Ng also welcomed recipients to join and be a part of the SMA family, adding that "SMA stands as one body for medicine that advocates not only for current doctors but for doctors-to-be."



SMACF Meet the Chairman session 2021

Although there were more than 40 recipients from different schools and in different phases of their medical journey, they came together at this virtual event and shared more about themselves and their future endeavours. Some shared their personal stories and encounters that inspired them to embark on medicine as a profession, while others shared more about their hobbies as well as challenges faced during the pandemic. There were also a number of past recipients who took the opportunity to express their gratitude to SMACF for supporting them over the past years.

The evening concluded with a group photograph before we bade each other farewell. We would like to express our thanks to the recipients for taking the time to join us at this virtual event. It has been a challenging period for everyone but rest assured that SMACF will continue to strive hard to support you in pursuit of medicine as a career! ♦