

The EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Dr Tina Tan

Editor

Dr Tan is a psychiatrist with the Better Life Psychological Medicine Clinic, and a visiting consultant at the Institute of Mental Health. She is also an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. Between work and family life, she squeezes time out for her favourite pastimes – reading a good (fiction) book and writing.

This issue of *SMA News* isn't as light as it ought to be, considering it is December. But then, it is because we have a lot to share with you – our readers. We feature articles on medical evacuation, which was especially important in the earlier days of the pandemic and continues to be a crucial part of ensuring that the sick get the medical treatment they need.

We also feature this year's Honorary Members and Merit Award recipients, all of whom are, in my humble opinion, deserving of the recognition they have received.

In addition, I wish to highlight the Health Connective initiative, supported by SMA, intended to provide a collaborative platform between doctors and insurers. Healthcare insurance will no doubt continue to be a prickly issue that needs to be addressed; SMA hopes that by supporting this initiative, there will come a sustainable and feasible resolution of some of the pre-existing challenges.

The month of December is typically meant for unwinding. After all, it is the end of the year, albeit a whirlwind one. Just when we thought life would carry on, the Omicron variant comes along like one of those sneaky Loki variants. Only time will tell how that will pan out in the grand scheme of things. In the meantime, stay safe and carry on.

Dr Lim Ing Huan

Guest Editor

Dr Lim is the first female interventional cardiologist in Singapore. She is an early adopter of new technology and is a key opinion leader in international cardiology conferences. She shares a clinic with her twin sister, an ENT surgeon in Mount Elizabeth Hospital. Travel, fine food, family love and friendships are the things that keep her going.

Another year has passed by, interspersed with Phase 2 and Phase 3 Heightened Alert without the drama of the lockdowns. The eerie silence and sparse traffic on the roads in April 2020 were somewhat gut-wrenching to experience. When I was the lone runner on the roads, I wondered whether I was witnessing the end of the world. Fast forward to 2021, we now enjoy more than the usual traffic. Innumerable cyclists compete with the usual road users, chasing buses and sometimes illegally trying their luck on the expressways, prompting a slew of new road safety signs. The ubiquitous green of Grab delivery has also blended into our subconscious.

I downloaded Checkpoint.sg in March 2020. Initially, it was to check if we may run out of fresh eggs and vegetables, then it was with sadness as I saw the empty roads. 29 November 2021 finally marked the day the Singapore-Malaysia Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) opened after much delay, though tragically too late for some. Separation from loved ones in the pandemic is something constantly replayed.

Air VTLs were established earlier than our land VTL. Overnight, polymerase chain reaction tests became the passport for travel. The dizzying rate of changes to VTLs and Stay-Home Notices was not for the faint-hearted. The mere mention of travel bubbles became a taboo. Students studying in the UK fared slightly better than those in Australia. I sincerely applaud the decisiveness of students who chose to transfer.

The buzzword in 2021 is "living with COVID-19". The nightclub and

karaoke lounge saga was Singapore's ignoramus lesson in social reopening, threatening our pristine image on the world stage. We survived the Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Mandarin Hotel, Jurong Fishery, and horrors of all, the bus interchange clusters. Our vaccination drive has been a success. While healthcare workers are still mandated to undergo twice weekly nasal antigen rapid tests, the Ministry of Defence has already been using saliva tests since May 2021. This is, however, a topic for another day.

I hope 2021 is a year of transition to a better world. Just as how the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference provided a structure to protect and restore ecosystems, the pandemic produced a hybrid work model and shared economy that hopefully invokes a healthier lifestyle. See you all next year! ♦