

# The EDITORS' 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.

When Singapore went into the circuit breaker period in April 2020, I remember scrolling through some Government websites trying to figure out what services were deemed essential and what were not. I remember the outcry from various sectors (including my colleagues working in the fields of counselling and psychology) who were relegated to “non-essential” services. One might argue that every healthcare service is essential, but in crunch times, tough decisions were made with no room for in-betweens, resulting in the divide between “essential” and “non-essential”. The impact to every sector was felt, regardless.

This issue, we feature articles on the impact that safe management measures had on certain medical services, in particular those of people with special needs and certain surgical services that one might not consider “dire”. Nonetheless, the past two years have had a ripple effect on many things.

In addition, we have included heartfelt eulogies for Prof Cynthia Goh, whose passing has left a mark on those of us who knew her, worked with her and were taught by her. Rest in peace, Prof Goh.

As I penned this editorial after a typical busy day at work, Singapore has announced that she will be implementing streamlined COVID-19 measures on 15 March, just after the peak of the Omicron wave. With public hospitals’ emergency departments, poly-clinics and private primary care clinics still seeing high numbers of patients daily, one can just imagine how challenging it is for our healthcare workers to attend to patients while fully gowned up in personal protective equipment on a day-to-day basis. With this in mind, I would like to salute our healthcare workers for soldiering on despite the pandemic fatigue and the tremendous stress on them.

During the various waves of COVID-19 infections, there were medical services that took a back seat so that healthcare resources could be diverted to battle the pandemic. In this issue, we are delighted to have Dr Kumaran Rasappan and Dr James Wee share with us the impact of COVID-19 on their orthopaedic surgical loads and how they continued to care for and treat their patients during these trying times. We are also privileged to have Dr See Hui Ti share her personal story of what it was like to have home-based learning for her child with special needs, and the resilience of our support services during the circuit breaker period and beyond.

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Deputy Editor

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On a lighter note, Dr Denise Au Eong pens her reflections as a Foundation Year 1 doctor working in the National Health Service in Scotland during the pandemic, many miles away from home. For those who want a taste of overseas travel, A/Prof Andrew Chin’s article on how he navigated the Vaccinated Travel Lane and the various travelling restrictions during his working trip to Europe is a must read.

As Singapore and countries around the world transit to an endemic state and find ways to live peacefully with COVID-19, we must not forget to give ourselves and each other a pat on the shoulder for braving the pandemic over the past two years. And be sure to smell the flowers along the way. ♦