



# The EDITOR'S MUSINGS

*Dr Tina Tan*

## Editor

Dr Tan is a psychiatrist in private practice and an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. She treats mental health conditions in all age groups but has a special interest in caring for the elderly. With a love for the written word, she makes time for reading, writing and self-publishing on top of caring for her patients and loved ones.

In case anyone reading this needs further convincing that Singapore's population is ageing, *The Straits Times* recently published an article stating that our proportion of citizens aged 65 and above is now 18.4%.<sup>1</sup> That's almost one in five citizens. By 2030, that number will be 23.8%, which is roughly one in four citizens. This is no joke, in many senses of the phrase. And we've been reminded time and again to prepare for the "silver tsunami". Some of us might already be part of it, or are barrelling right towards that "silver wave".

The above statistics should be a timely reminder that the needs of our population are changing, and that we as doctors need to be prepared for the changes that are coming. No doubt, many of us already care for elderly folks as part and parcel of our

clinical practice, but there are many non-medical aspects that we can further equip ourselves for, so that we can better advise our patients, their loved ones and our own loved ones too. Such areas would include the management of our welfare and finances, volunteering opportunities and community services that are available for the elderly.

A necessary part of managing an ageing population is ensuring that our elderly are adequately cared for, particularly those who have no one else. Our Feature is an email interview with Mr Samuel Tan, as he talks about the work being done by All Saints Home, as well as the experiences of their nursing home and residential care facilities during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We've also included an article by members of TriGen, a charity project that was kick-started by medical students (who are now doctors themselves) to provide volunteer services for the elderly. I highly recommend reading about the work that has been done by Dr Kennedy Ng, Dr Angeline Tey and their fellow TriGen members.

While we haven't featured any articles on the abuse of elderly, one of the more silent (and often,

inadmissible) forms it takes is that of financial abuse, something which I've seen for myself and heard of from my fellow geriatric psychiatry colleagues. Hence, close to my heart is the article by Dr Giles Tan, where he talks about the differences between making a will, signing an Advance Medical Directive and appointing a donee under the Lasting Power of Attorney. I cannot emphasise how important it is for us as doctors to understand what each of these legal instruments are. We can help our patients to make informed decisions about how they wish to spend the golden years of their lives. As individuals, this knowledge would also empower us to decide how our assets and bodies are taken care of when we can no longer manage for ourselves.

Also of interest is the article by Mr Eric Tin and Dr Cheng Wei Ray, who have contributed Part 3 of their series on the coronial system, an insightful and informative piece on the Coroner's Inquiry and the role that doctors play in it. Happy reading! ♦

## Reference

1. Chin SF. *S'pore's population ageing rapidly: Nearly 1 in 5 citizens is 65 years and older. The Straits Time [Internet]. 27 September 2022. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3fM6KIT>.*