

The Editors' 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.



This year's Annual Dinner was special for two reasons. First, Dr Ng Chee Kwan gave his inaugural speech as the newly minted SMA President, in which he highlighted important areas of work that our organisation is involved in, including the high-impact Health Information Bill. Second, we hosted overseas delegates from various countries for the Medical Association of South East Asian Nations Mid-Term Meeting earlier that day, and several members of the SMA Council

joined the delegates on a mini tour around Singapore and for a meal the day before.

This is but part of the important work that SMA does on a day-to-day basis – advocating for our profession and forging ties within the local and overseas medical communities (including our very own Singaporean students who are overseas and keeping in touch through their bimonthly "Letters from the UK" column).

Happy reading.

DR TOH HAN CHONG

Guest Editor

Dr Toh is a senior consultant medical oncologist and Deputy CEO (Strategic Partnerships) at the National Cancer Centre Singapore. He was a former Editor of *SMA News*. In his free time, Dr Toh enjoys eating durians and ice cream, reading, writing, rowing and watching films. Thankfully, the latter four are not fattening.



National Day is always a time of celebration, reflection and thanksgiving, and so too is the SMA Annual Dinner. Medicine in Singapore has come a very long way since our independence. Just like the pride and security we feel when boarding a Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight to the warm chime of "Welcome home, Dr Toh!", and its supreme service and satay starter, Singapore medicine is also world class. Yet like SIA, there are headwinds for Singapore medicine on the road ahead – an ageing population, shortage of nurses (a global problem), burnout among doctors, and making technology an enabler rather than stumbler in our safety-first patient-facing work beyond being merely a data storage and mover (which can sometimes hiccup more than the amazing tech-less *dabbawallas* of Mumbai who make one delivery error in over nine million lunchbox deliveries). And like SIA flight prices, healthcare is becoming more expensive.

I recently watched the movie *Barbie*. It was good but I did not find it to be a tour de force social commentary even as it hosed down misogynistic toxic masculinity. I grew up in the time of women's liberation on America television, with shows like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Charlie's Angels*, and movies like *My Brilliant Career*, *Alien*, *The Piano*; more recently *The Silence of the Lambs*,

Dangal and *RBG*. From a young age, I have seen empowered women doctors, many in leadership roles, such as the late and iconic Mama Oon (Dr Oon Chiew Seng). My late mother went to medical school at a time when the cohort was still mostly male. Thankfully, today's medical schools are way more gender balanced. Singapore enjoys more gender equity in medicine and other fields than some large first-world democracies, even if it is still a work in progress. We can be proud of this as we celebrate Singapore medicine and National Day.

"Humans only have one ending. Ideas are forever." – Barbie, the movie

Innovating for the future, translating biomedical research into patient care, bringing medical management into homes, and training doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to the highest standards, Singapore medicine continues to challenge itself. The Singapore Medical Council is also introducing compulsory continuing medical education on medical ethics, a reminder of the sacred trust patients put in their doctors. The brave new world of telemedicine, generative artificial intelligence (AI) and data sharing will need a new paradigm of managing consent, confidentiality and compassion. Especially if, channeling the prophetic 1980's film *Electric Dreams*, "Doctor AI" can one day possess consciousness, reason, passion, anger, jealousy and love. ♦