

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 issue has been a long time coming, and I am very pleased that we made it happen. More than that, I am moved by the efforts of the many doctors and medical teams who serve our community beyond what we understand as “regular” clinical work – all of which goes to supporting our patients beyond their primary and tertiary care environments.

Articles from Dr Chen Shiling and Dr Lim Hong Huay showcase a growing problem concerning ageing parents of persons with intellectual disabilities, and the importance of caring for the carer as well.

Dr Christina Tiong has submitted an article about the tireless (often, thankless) work

being done by the Home Nursing Foundation, and Dr Raymond Leong has provided insights into the efforts by the Tsao Foundation. Both organisations are to be lauded for the initiatives being meted out to support our elderly in the community.

We hope that this issue puts the spotlight on an aspect of healthcare which is not as prominently featured as tertiary or primary care, yet is nonetheless just as important as these other areas. As Dr Shravan Verma neatly summarises in his article on Speedoc’s initiatives into the community, may these ventures continue to empower “diverse groups within the community to prioritise their health and well-being”.

DR CLIVE TAN

Guest Editor

Dr Tan is a member of the SMA News Editorial Board and a public health specialist working in the public sector. He recently went on a diet and lost five kilograms in four months.



In this issue dedicated to the topic of community health, we take a moment to acknowledge the pivotal role of the community as the nexus where the health and social care sectors converge, fostering greater inter-sectoral coordination, care integration and progress towards people-centred care. Our understanding of health has expanded to better understand that good physical and mental health is strongly linked to social aspects of human nature.

I recall that it was not too long ago when people were sceptical of innovations such as telemedicine, with some asking why

Singapore, being a small country, would need telemedicine when our hospitals and clinics are so convenient and accessible. There were similar views on community care services as well – why do we need to invest in this area? At the extremes of age and for certain communities (eg, differently abled people), the distance that people are willing to travel for care differs – and we are now more aware of that.

Place-based care, rooted in the principles of community health, recognises the importance of understanding and addressing health within the context of where people

live, work and play. It also emphasises the role of community resources, social support networks and environmental factors in promoting health and preventing disease.

Health is not the mere absence of disease; health is not determined by biological factors alone, but also by social, environmental, economic and cultural factors that influence the opportunities and choices for healthy living. Health is not a passive or individualistic concept, but an active and collective one that requires the participation and empowerment of our people, the coming together of communities and the collaboration of various sectors and stakeholders.

In this issue, we journey into the intricate tapestry of community-based healthcare, highlighting the challenges, triumphs, transformative power and profound impact of these community health sector leaders and pioneers. They are working in the community, with the community, and for the community. Through their sharing, we can hear the voices of those on the frontline and also see the patients and families whose lives were touched by their compassion and healing touch.

Dr Raymond Leong's work at the Tsao Foundation highlights its strong commitment to ageing and community health, and features the foundation's close connection with the community to provide essential healthcare services and also foster vibrant communities where seniors can thrive. Dr Christina Tiong's sharing about the Home Nursing Foundation showcases its commitment to serving patients in the community and the invaluable role of home-based healthcare in enhancing quality of life and maintaining the dignity of our patients. Dr Shravan Verma's account of Speedoc's innovative approach to bring hospital-level care to the community reflects the evolving landscape of healthcare delivery, where technology meets

compassion to ensure accessibility and efficiency. Dr Chen Shiling's journey of providing holistic healthcare for persons with intellectual disability and their families shines a light on the often overlooked needs of this vulnerable population. We see that the term "community" can extend beyond geographical boundaries to encompass individuals united by a common ailment or disability. Dr Lim Hong Huay's journey with CaringSG epitomises the power of community-driven initiatives in supporting caregivers and exemplifies the transformative impact of compassion and collaboration in building resilient communities.

As we reflect on these narratives, we are reminded of the intrinsic connection between our health and the community. It is not merely about medical treatments and interventions; it is about fostering connections, empowering individuals and building supportive networks that enable our patients and their families to be cared for in the community, and by the community.

Through these stories, we can explore the multifaceted dimensions of community health and community medicine. From grassroots initiatives to innovative healthcare models, each story serves as a testament to the resilience, compassion and creativity of those working tirelessly to improve the health and well-being of their communities.

As our population ages, the need to rethink and invest in community health becomes increasingly apparent. We hope that this issue will inspire all to think differently about community health and imagine how care can be more embedded within the community as Singapore progresses towards building healthier, more inclusive communities for all. ♦

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