

# 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.



We have an exciting line-up this month, spotlighting the issue of vaping and the attendant challenges encountered by doctors in their day-to-day clinical practice.

Dr Puah Ser Hon and Ms Kng Kwee Keng have contributed an article summarising what a vape is and the dangers of vaping. Dr Chie Zhi Ying shares her insightful perspective on the issue as a primary care physician, while Dr Ian Matthias Ng writes about the problems posed by electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) addiction. Dr Clive Tan and Mr Sean Ang have submitted a piece discussing the ethics of managing a young (and decidedly vulnerable) person who vapes and have included a poignant and heartfelt first-person narrative to illustrate their points. Finally, Dr Koong Heng Nung and Dr Ong Lynn have written about the global public health initiative, the Tobacco-Free Generation (TFG), and Singapore's contributions to the movement.

The reality is that many of us, including myself, have encountered patients who vape. Life is stressful. The common perception is

that vaping is trendy, alleviates stress and helps a person cope. However, while vaping may provide some temporary relief, it only masks one's problems. It does not resolve them. This is why each of these articles all bear hallmarks of the same message – vaping creates more problems than it solves, and the treatment of a patient who vapes should be done in a non-judgemental manner while providing education about the risks posed and the long-term potential dangers.

Last, but not least, this editorial would not be complete without mentioning A/Prof Daniel Fung's tongue-in-cheek contribution about an "innocuous brown bean" that he is addicted to. I daresay I am as well, and I am happy to join the ranks of those who cannot get by without their daily dose (or two) of caffeine.

This editorial does not do justice to the spread of contributions we have received from our expert panel of authors, so I simply invite you to read on, perhaps while enjoying your daily caffeine fix.

## DR CLIVE TAN

*Guest Editor*

Dr Tan is a father of three, and he is very glad that vaping is illegal in Singapore. When he travels to countries where vaping is legal, his heart aches when he sees youths vaping. He is also a public health physician based in the public sector health system.



As healthcare professionals, we know that smoking is the number one modifiable risk factor for many health conditions. "Doctor say stop smoking" is a phrase families and relatives commonly use to encourage patients to stop smoking. In this issue, various medical professionals share about their perspectives and experiences in smoking and vaping cessation. When it comes to smoking and vaping cessation, prevention is the best strategy. The TFG is one creative preventive approach that policymakers around the world have considered and are considering. But what happens when people are already smoking and vaping?

In Singapore, although e-cigarettes and vaping are illegal, it is not uncommon to see people openly vaping in public spaces,

and even students vaping in schools. With the recent increased emphasis on vaping enforcement, perhaps people who vape have become more discreet. But do we perceive them as criminals or victims of Big Tobacco? We see many youths fall prey to vaping – the e-cigarette is a highly efficient nicotine delivery machine, and it is so easy and convenient for people to get addicted. Our healthcare workforce is doing what we can for them but we are also asking, should we do more? Can we do more? I hope this issue will provide our readers with perspectives from our practitioners and advocates working to reduce the rates and harms of smoking and vaping, and I hope this gives us insights and ideas on what lies ahead in Singapore's fight against smoking and vaping. ♦