

SMA SURVEYS A CALL TO PARTICIPATE

Text by Dr Ng Chee Kwan

From time to time, the SMA conducts surveys on issues that the Association strongly feels would affect doctors and patients. We use these surveys to understand the opinions on the ground, and for the purpose of advocacy on important healthcare matters.

One example is the SMA Joint Survey on the Public Sentiments towards the National Electronic Health Record (NEHR) conducted in 2018 together with the College of Family Physicians Singapore and the Academy of Medicine, Singapore. The findings of the survey were published, together with the Ministry of Health's Statement on the survey.¹

There were 2,100 respondents for the above survey, which was quite a significant number. The findings were very useful in shaping SMA's thinking on the role of the NEHR, and I recently summarised these views in my March 2024 column entitled "Optimising Health Information Privacy in NEHR".²

We also conducted the SMA Integrated Shield Plan (IP) Providers' Ranking Survey for two consecutive years in 2022 and 2023. These surveys sought to obtain doctors' opinions on their experiences with the various IP providers, in terms of the inclusiveness of panels, transparency of doctor selection criteria for panels, and more.^{3,4} 210 doctors responded to the first survey, and this was useful

in providing insights into the extent of the issues that doctors faced with IP providers. Notably, the number of respondents dropped to 152 doctors in the second survey.

The IP ranking surveys were quoted in a recent *Straits Times* editorial on IPs, as a possible reference for the public in deciding which IP to choose.⁵ However, the editorial also highlighted that the relatively small number of respondents in the survey meant the ranking was based on the views of less than 10 percent of private sector specialists.

While our IP ranking surveys provided useful information and feedback to stakeholders, the fact that relatively few doctors participated in the surveys would inevitably be highlighted as a limitation and thus lessen the impact of the surveys.

Nonetheless, by publishing the results of our surveys, we provide good visibility of issues that matter, and increase awareness not just for the profession, but also patients and policy-makers. With that in mind, I would like to thank all the doctors who participated in our recent survey on informed consent, the results of which will be published in a future issue of *SMA News*.

The next time you receive an invitation to an SMA survey, I sincerely hope that you will take a few minutes of your time to participate. Every

participant counts towards increasing the validity of the survey and helps us to represent you better! ♦

References

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Dr Ng is a urologist in private practice and current President of the SMA. He has two teenage sons whom he hopes will grow much taller than him. He has probably collected too many watches for his own good.

