

DUTY AND DILIGENCE:

Annual National Medico-Legal Seminar 2024

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Over two days on 19 and 20 October, nearly 400 doctors, lawyers and allied health professionals gathered for a weekend of hearty debate and discussion at the Annual National Medico-Legal Seminar (ANMLS) 2024, jointly organised by the SMA Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism (CMEP) and the Medico-Legal Society of Singapore (MLSS). Held at One Farrer Hotel, the two-day seminar was titled “Confidence in Consent: Equipping Doctors to Navigate the Changing Terrain of the Duty to Advise”, covering a wide variety of topics such as Section 37 of the Civil Law Act (CLA), informed consent, and medical risk perception and communication.

Dr Charmain Heah, MLSS council member and SMA CMEP faculty member, began the seminar with a short opening address, before inviting Justice Judith Prakash, Senior Judge of the Supreme Court of Singapore, to speak on Section 37 of the CLA and its implications for doctors. Other speakers for the day continued to delve into the topic of consent-taking and a lively discussion was had on the standard of care for medical advice, the legal tests for medical negligence, and balancing time and resources with adequate counselling and documentation of consent. SMA President Dr Ng Chee Kwan also spoke on

the results of the recent SMA survey on informed consent, the results of which will be published in a future issue of *SMA News*. For more insights into Section 37’s impact on medical practice, read the report by law students published on page 12.

Participants returned early the next day for day 2 of ANMLS, this time focusing on risk perception and communication in healthcare, and empowering patients as decision-makers in their own care. Speakers from a variety of institutions shared their personal experiences and insights into these issues, including how different mindsets and framing can drastically affect one’s perception of the same statistical data.

Panel discussions on both days also helped facilitate audience engagement, with audience members taking the initiative to ask questions either in person or via the Slido platform. One of the hot topics covered during the panel discussions was the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in consent-taking, and Dr Wong Tien Hua, President of the College of Family Physicians Singapore, gave a live demonstration of how an AI scribe might be used in the GP consult setting in the future. This drew much interest from the participants and Edmund Kronenburg, Vice-President of MLSS and

SMA CMEP faculty member, conducted an impromptu cross-examination of Dr Wong to verify the AI scribe’s reliability. He concluded the questioning session stating that it was important for the doctor to check and verify the generated content and document having done so, in such scenarios.

In his closing, A/Prof Lai Siang Hui, President of MLSS, thanked participants for their attendance and enthusiastic contribution to the seminar, and expressed his eager anticipation for ANMLS 2025.

We would also like to express our thanks to all speakers and participants, our main sponsor, Medical Protection Society, as well as our other sponsors, Summit Planners and MIMS, for the success of the Annual National Medico-Legal Seminar 2024! ♦

Legend

1. SMA President Dr Ng Chee Kwan (first from left) during panel discussion on “Consent in Real Life”
2. Enthusiastic audience involvement spurred riveting discussion
3. Justice Judith Prakash (third from right) posing for a group photo with fellow speakers

