

# 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.



The team and I are excited to present this issue, which features contributions from senior doctors who have dedicated a significant portion of their time to volunteer work in the course of their medical careers. In these snippets, each doctor highlights the *why* behind their volunteerism and the joys they have derived from it.

Not to be outdone, we have also included an interview with current Academy of Medicine,

Singapore's (AMS) Master, Dr Wong Chiang Yin, who is no stranger to many of us. Over a delightful meal, Dr Wong engaged us on the topic of his formative years, his drive to advocacy, and of course, food. Alas, there were many pearls of wisdom which could not be recorded down for posterity, but perhaps if you treat Dr Wong to a meal, he will share them with you.

With that, happy eating, and happy reading.

## A/PROF DANIEL FUNG

Guest Editor

A/Prof Fung is a father of five grown-up children and grandfather to five toddlers. He has worked as part of the National Healthcare Group for 25 years and has been married to his wife Joyce for 33 years. He will celebrate 55 years of child psychiatry in Singapore this year, and he counts it as a blessing that he can still give back as a volunteer in Singapore and globally.



What does it mean to be a professional? This is a question that remains fundamental to our identity as doctors. A well-established definition of a professional rests on three pillars: special skills, a commitment to doing good, and self-regulation.<sup>1</sup> It is this second element – doing good – that is the essence of volunteerism in medicine, and in turn, reinforces the privilege of self-regulation.

The philosophy of medicine is deeply rooted in cultural values. In Asia, the role of the physician has long been associated with Confucian ideals of benevolence (*ren*, 仁) and righteousness (*yi*, 义). The practice of medicine has been viewed not merely as a profession but as a moral duty – a commitment to healing that transcends personal gain. The teachings of Sun Simiao, an eminent physician from the Tang dynasty, emphasised the responsibility of doctors to act with love and compassion.

This edition of *SMA News* celebrates doctors who exemplify this spirit of service. It highlights the voluntary contributions of respected senior doctors, including Dr Gordon Tan, Prof Ho Lai Yun and Dr T Thirumoorthy. Each of them has dedicated their time and expertise to serving communities beyond their formal professional obligations. In doing so, they embody the very ideals of our profession.

Volunteerism is more than an act of charity; it is an extension of what it means to be a doctor. Our skills are not merely for personal advancement or economic gain but are also meant to benefit society. In serving underserved populations, mentoring the next

generation, or engaging in medical outreach, we reinforce our commitment to the common good. This not only enriches those we serve but also strengthens the moral and ethical foundation of our profession.

Self-regulation is a privilege that society grants us, based on trust that we will act in its best interest. That trust is sustained by our continued demonstration of altruism and ethical practice. The more we give, the more we prove that we are worthy of the responsibility of self-governance. This symbiotic relationship underscores why volunteerism should not be viewed as an optional pursuit but as a fundamental duty of the medical professional.

In this issue, we also feature an interview with Dr Wong Chiang Yin, the new Master of AMS, who shares his insights on the evolving role of doctors in society. His perspective reminds us that, beyond our clinical responsibilities, we are stewards of a noble calling – one that is enriched, not diminished, by our willingness to serve.

Let us ask ourselves: how can we continue to do good? How can we ensure that our profession remains one that upholds the highest ideals of skill, service and integrity? The answer lies in our actions. By giving back, we reaffirm our identity as professionals and safeguard the principles that define us. ♦

### References

1. Cruess RL, Johnston S, Cruess SR (2002). Professionalism for medicine: Opportunities and obligations. *Med J Aust* 2002; 177(4):208-11.
2. Unschuld PU. *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*. California: University of California Press, 2016.