

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 issue of one's gender while practising medicine is a perennial one. Patients often have a preference of whether they want to see a male or female doctor, and this has to be balanced with the limited resources available in any given healthcare setting. Our two Features articles brought back memories for me, particularly from my house officer days serving my time in Urology. Thankfully, the male patients I encountered, with their complex prostate and bladder issues, were not fussed about me being a "girl" (or at least, they did not say so). Later on, when I finally dived into my psychiatry postings as a resident, things got interesting.

"I want to see a lady doctor."

Yes, I will admit my gender is an advantage for me, especially in my specialty of practice. In my experience, most women want to see a lady doctor due to the perception of mutual understanding, better empathy and communication styles. There are even men who wish to see me precisely because they do not want to see a fellow "male", even if in a professional healthcare setting. This reality is what we have tried to convey in our "compare and contrast" Feature pieces by female medical student Audrey Ng and our male illustrators Dr Kevin Loy and Dr Justinian Zai. Regardless of where we might find ourselves practising, we doctors will be perceived by our gender, either in a more or less favourable light. The trick is to, at all times, make our patients comfortable, so that they are willing to engage with us in their journey of healing.

DR LIM ING HAAN

Guest Editor

Dr Lim is the first female interventional cardiologist in Singapore. She is an early adopter of new technology and is a key opinion leader in international cardiology conferences. She shares a clinic with her twin, Dr Lim Ing Ruen, an ENT surgeon at Mount Elizabeth Hospital. Both believe in the power of food, travel, laughter and loyalty in forming strong family bonding.



The decision to dedicate an entire issue to medical students emerged following the previous edition's focus on doctors in training, which illuminated both their challenges and achievements. For this edition, each article has been thoughtfully selected to offer perspectives through the eyes of future doctors, helping us better understand how to provide meaningful support and guidance.

Enduring and evolving challenges

Medical students still encounter academic, financial and emotional challenges much like those in prior generations. The traditional rigours of medical training with long hours, vast amounts of information and high-stakes examinations remain. Yet, contemporary pressures have magnified these strains. Constant competition, fear of failure and the drive for perfection further amplified by social media can erode mental well-being.

Experiences of Singaporean students abroad

For Singaporean students pursuing their medical education overseas, the experience brings its own set of difficulties. Navigating

a foreign environment without the support of close families may accelerate personal growth yet also lead to a sense of isolation for some. The initial ache of living away is a quiet challenge. Extended time studying and working overseas may also make it more difficult to reconnect when they eventually return home to work.

Adapting to modern medicine

The field of medical education is constantly modernising with advancements such as artificial intelligence and telemedicine. While technology and systems progress at a remarkable pace, compassion and empathy must keep up. Medical students must also be prepared to navigate enduring issues such as traditional perceptions of gender within the profession.

Supporting future physicians

Preparing the next generation of doctors involves more than delivering medical education. It requires a commitment to nurturing their personal and professional growth. The most valuable contributions we can make are to provide genuine care, thoughtful mentorship and hope for the future. ♦