

Thoughts and Wishes

for the Family Medicine Journey

As family medicine (FM) comes to be recognised as the 36th specialty with effect from 1 November 2025, SMA News invites primary care practitioners to share their hopes and wishes for this latest specialty, and what they may wish to impart to their current and future juniors in FM.

Text by Dr Rachel Lim, Family Physician, SingHealth Polyclinics

I am really glad to see FM being recognised as a specialty, which is testament to the hard and heart work put in by primary care physicians day in day out. A robust primary healthcare system is the foundation for a healthy community and healthcare ecosystem. Though our duty to patients goes beyond any quest for name and fame, increased recognition can play a part towards increasing the prestige of FM and hopefully drive the quest for family physicians to be of a standard equivalent to our specialist colleagues, albeit in a generalist field.

With the Healthier SG initiative and the increased centrality of the family doctor, I hope the envisioned continuity of care and comprehensive care that FM is characterised by can truly take place to bring healthcare upstream and result in a healthier Singapore!

Text by Dr Lee Pheng Soon, GP, private practice

Easier to start, easier to retire.

The young family physicians wishing to provide basic primary care in his/her local community should have a fairer way to start, and – after a life of service – an easier way to close, his/her practice than at the present. Needing to pay tens of thousands of dollars for monthly rental is too heavy a burden at start.

Similarly, needing to hold the records of his/her patients for at least six years is a very heavy responsibility on retiring. My dream is for a more practical way for them, both on entry and at exit, so they can just focus on the community that needs them.



Text by Dr Anandan Gerard Thiagarajah, Senior Consultant Family Physician, National University Polyclinics

If a restroom has two sensor taps, would you use the left or the right? You might say, "It depends on where the door is, where the hand dryer is", and so on.

Well, who said that you cannot use both at the same time?

FM is full of "by-left" ways of solving problems that no textbook will prepare you for. From gently guiding a worried parent from denial to acceptance that their developmentally delayed child needs investigation to reassuring a call-centre staff that he/she is not a bad person for obtaining frequent medical certificates but is in need of help for the underlying depression, the skills needed in general practice are quite specialised indeed.

You are a detective, friend, finance-counsellor, mentor and leader all rolled into one. When facing complex situations, remember that you are much more than your MBBS, because who said that FM cannot be a specialty?

Text by Dr Tan Su-Ming, Family Physician, private practice

FM, when practised well, is actually really hard, because you will need tremendous breath and some depth. A family physician may also become a jack of all trades and master of one if you have a special interest in, say, the management of gout or diabetes.

Practise your craft and art with compassion, care, curiosity and a deep and genuine interest in your patient and you will be rewarded richly. The trust you gain from your patients over time is hard earned and sacred, and then you will have a genuine opportunity to influence, guide and sometimes heal.

And if you do it right, your inner life will be very, very rich.

Text by Dr Chie Zhi Ying, Family Physician, NHG Woodlands Polyclinic

As a family physician, it brings me great joy and pride that FM has attained recognition as a specialty. Hats off and a big thank you to the many generations of senior leaders of the FM community for championing tirelessly for us! This golden milestone marks a significant step highlighting the essential role of FM in providing comprehensive, holistic, personalised and relationship-based care, and it reinforces the importance of FM as the cornerstone of a strong healthcare system.

With specialty recognition, family physicians are better poised to provide coordinated, preventive and patient-centred care for our ageing population with increasingly complex healthcare needs. Ultimately, it is my hope that the FM community will continue to strive for excellence in clinical care, education and research, and care for patients and their families with compassion and dedication. Together with patient empowerment, close collaboration with other healthcare professionals and community partners, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of the communities we serve.



Text by Dr Ho Xin Qin, Resident Physician, Lakeside Family Medicine Clinic

As a primary care physician looking after both clinic and home care patients, I believe in the adage: "prevention is better than cure". It has been mind-opening to learn about the six pillars of lifestyle medicine: whole-food, plant-forward nutrition, physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, social connection and avoidance of risky substances. The evidence-based tools in lifestyle medicine have great potential to improve the chronic disease control in Singapore, as well as decrease the population's risk of contracting the three highs and other chronic diseases.

In 2026, I hope that more can be done in the realm of lifestyle modifications using the tools of lifestyle medicine, to benefit more patients. The Tzu Chi Food Farmacy focusing on food as medicine is a first in Singapore, as well as the Culinary Medicine Academy. I hope such ground-up initiatives can create an impact in preventive care in Singapore.

Text by Dr Gopal E-Wei Pamela, Associate Consultant, Sengkang Community Hospital

FM in Singapore stands at an important inflection point. As our population ages and care needs grow more complex, I am reminded daily – through conversations with my patients and their families – of how essential the family physician is as the first point of contact and trusted care coordinator. These encounters reinforce that our specialty is grounded not only in clinical expertise, but in the continuity, empathy and understanding built over years of shared journeys.

I hope to see FM further strengthened as it evolves and refines its professional identity as a specialisation in its own right – one recognised for its breadth, depth and unwavering commitment to person-centred, value-based and longitudinal care. With the Healthier SG initiative, we have an unprecedented chance to reshape how primary care anchors preventive health, empowers patients and connects care across diverse settings.

Looking ahead, my aspiration is for every family physician to feel supported by robust training pathways, strong teams and digital tools that enhance – not replace – the human touch that defines our work. Ultimately, our specialty will continue to thrive and reach greater heights if we remain grounded in what has always mattered most: holistic care, trusted relationships and a steadfast dedication to the communities we serve.

We congratulate and celebrate the achievements of the field of family medicine and welcome GPs and family physicians to write in and share your stories. Be it reflections on your journey, patient anecdotes, hopes for the future, or wisdom you may wish to share with colleagues and juniors, we look forward to carrying your writings in our pages. Email us at news@sma.org.sg for more information or to submit your stories. ♦