

SALUTING FELLOW FEMALE DOCTORS

By Dr Natalie Koh, Guest Editor

Season's greetings, on behalf of the SMA News team, and a warm shoutout to my co-editor Dr Tan Yia Swam. It has been a year full of surprises and new experiences, all positive, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to present this December issue with Yia Swam, which honours women in Medicine.

December is a wonderful month, and certainly a favourite time of the year for many. It is the season of giving, and also of hope and resolution. What better month than this, to feature inspirational insights and anecdotes from our community of female practitioners?

One of the most impactful books I have read this year was Sheryl Sandberg's autobiography *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. In it, she shares her thoughts on modern day feminism and what it takes for women today to lead at the workplace. She speaks of several noteworthy issues, but of greatest personal interest to me were two particular chapters. The first is "What Would You Do If You Weren't Afraid?", which addresses the leadership ambition gap and how women write themselves off before even attempting it; and the second is my personal favourite, "The Myth of Doing It All", in which the notion of "having it all" is picked apart and proven impossible, and the more practical question of whether one can "do it all" is asked instead.

This month, we have the pleasure of featuring A/Prof Chow Wan Cheng. Her impressive portfolio includes being the former Head of Gastroenterology and Hepatology in Singapore General Hospital, and most recently, pioneering the SingHealth Internal Medicine Residency Programme. We are honoured to have her share personal insights on her numerous achievements thus far (page 12). Leading by example, she is a perfect answer to the question of how far one can go if one "weren't afraid", and a fine practitioner of "leaning in", even before such a notion was conceived. That A/Prof Chow has done this all while remaining faithful in her pursuit of work she loves, is perhaps what is most extraordinary.

It is also our privilege to warmly welcome Dr Kanwaljit Soin, former President of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) and also the first female Nominated Member of Parliament, whose activism culminated in the groundbreaking introduction of the personal protective order for victims of domestic abuse. Dr Soin, in collaboration with Ms Jolene Tan from AWARE, have contributed an excellent article which addresses the important but less often discussed topic of sexual harassment in the medical workplace (page 15). We thank them for their joint efforts in presenting this sensitive subject in an open and constructive manner, especially in light of the requirements of healthcare workers' jobs, where personal boundaries are often challenged as we come into uniquely close contact with our patients and vice versa.

It also gives both Yia Swam and I great joy to present several humorous and practical interviews featuring a broad spectrum of fellow female doctors, who certainly make "doing it all" appear a reality (tips abound!) and we salute them for doing so in style. We are very grateful to all the doctors who contributed in various ways and this issue would not have been possible without you.

We wish all our readers a very joyous holiday season, and hope this issue brings you as much delight as we have had putting it together. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! **SMA**



Dr Natalie Koh is a third year Internal Medicine resident with SingHealth. She graduated from Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine in 2009. Whenever possible, she spends her time at home reading, and hopes in vain to become a MasterChef by watching the Food Network channel.

Did You Know?

LEE CHOO NEO (1895 - 1947) became Singapore's first woman medical practitioner in June **1920**.

In **1979**, a cap was introduced to limit the female medical student intake to **one-third** of the total cohort of the National University of Singapore medical faculty. This gender quota was abolished in **2002**.

In 1994, there was only one local medical school, with a cohort of 752 students, and **29.4%** were female. Today, there are three medical schools in Singapore. As of this year, they have a total enrolment of 1,709 students, of which **50.7%** are female.

As of 31 December 2012, there were 10,669 registered medical practitioners in Singapore, and **4,045** were female. Locally, the top three medical specialties with the most women last year were **Paediatric Medicine, Anaesthesiology** and **Obstetrics & Gynaecology**, in descending order.

Sources: Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Ministry of Health, National University of Singapore, Singapore Infopedia, Singapore Medical Council and Straits Times

WE WANT YOU!

Do you have inspiring medical stories, insight and expert opinions regarding the local healthcare system, unusual encounters with patients, or beautiful images of faraway exotic lands to share with our readers?

If your answer is "YES", and you **LOVE** to write, then **YOU'RE** the person we're looking for!

Submissions are now open for 2014. Email your article to us at news@sma.org.sg!