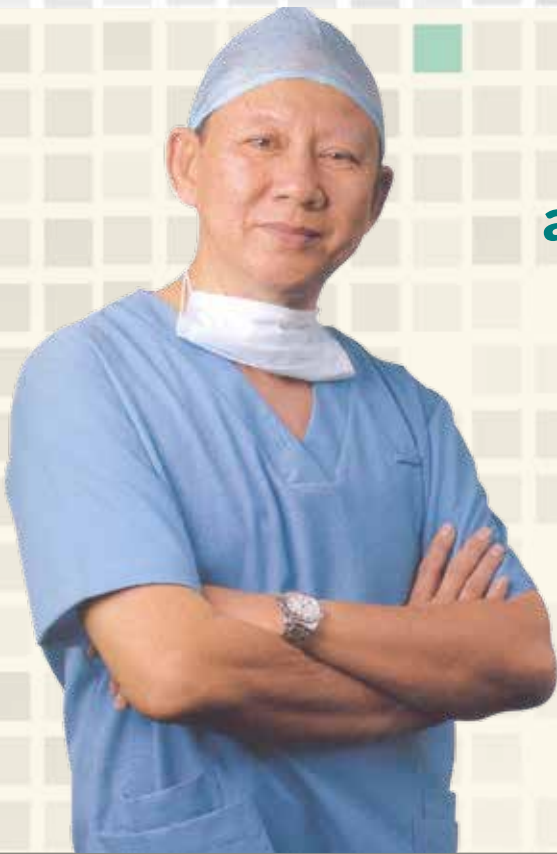




# The Wind beneath Our Wings

**SINCE ITS** establishment in September 1959, SMA has played a significant role in local healthcare as the main professional body for physicians in Singapore. However, the Association can only make a positive difference through its strong membership and dedicated volunteers. For this special issue, *SMA News* checks in with 34 members and volunteers about their journey with SMA, and what they hope for its future.



**I hope to see SMA grow as an organisation with a heart and soul. After all, medical education is education of the heart.**

**WHAT DOES SMA MEAN TO YOU?**

I belong to the SMA family, which has one voice for the medical fraternity across disciplines. We look after the welfare of our colleagues in all areas, from professional and academic issues, to social matters. We also work for the good of doctors, patients and the general public.

*Prof Low Cheng Hock*  
SMA Honorary Member

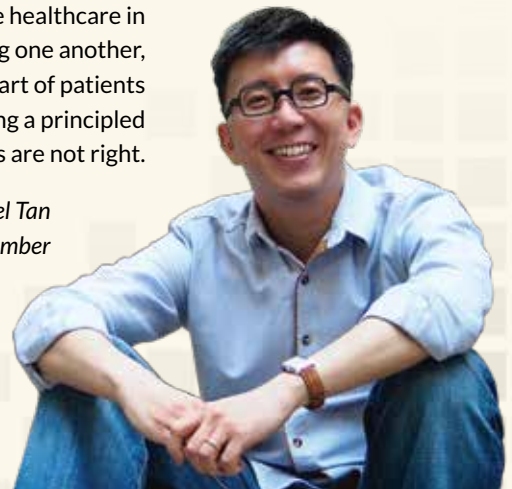


As I am still a medical student, SMA helps to remind me of the importance of contributing back to the community. By supporting various community projects such as Public Health Screening, SMA and the SMA Charity Fund (SMACF) create opportunities where medical students can play an active role in serving society.

*Mr Kenneth Leong*  
SMA Student Member

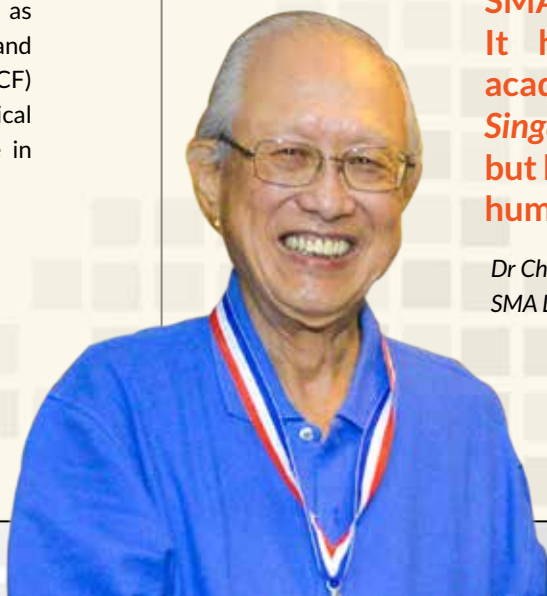
SMA membership means being part of a greater community of doctors, working in concert to improve healthcare in Singapore. It means helping one another, it means advocacy on the part of patients and peers, and it means taking a principled stand when things are not right.

*A/Prof Nigel Tan*  
SMA Council Member



**SMA has moved with the times. It has continued to provide academic teaching through the *Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ)* but has also shown a softer, more human side in *SMA News*.**

*Dr Chang Ming Yu James*  
SMA Life Member





**I hope that SMA can get all stakeholders to revisit the utility of a Guideline on Fees (GOF). Before SMA's GOF was voluntarily withdrawn, it had a moderating influence on doctors' fees through peer pressure and moral persuasion.**

**HOW HAS SMA EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?**

SMA has to continually evolve to assert its mission of representing the aspirations of doctors. In the 70s, it was the private practitioners' perception that SMA pandered to the Government's interests. A group thus left to set up the Association of Private Medical Practitioners. In my term of office as SMA President from 1996 to 1999, two groups felt disenfranchised and set up their own organisations – one representing female doctors, and the other, Singaporeans trained overseas, because of the lack of training opportunities accorded to young doctors then. Doctors now face the immense challenge of practicing ethical Medicine in an increasing commercial world, and look to SMA for leadership.

*A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean  
SMA Past President*



I have been interested in medico-legal matters since I became a lawyer in the late 1980s. The practice of law can be somewhat insular, so when the opportunity came for me to be able to interact more closely with professionals from other fields and learn more about how they work, think and live, I found it an enriching experience. Some doctors are quite interesting characters, I have to say.

*Mr Lek Siang Pheng  
SMA Honorary Legal Advisor*

I hope all recipients of the various SMACF financial assistance programmes will contribute to the community when they are able to, and that this will sustain the virtuous cycle of giving among the medical profession.

*Mr Colin Lim Fung Wan  
Director, SMA Charity Fund*



**The opportunity and immense satisfaction of driving the journal forward motivate me to volunteer. We want to make SMJ a journal of choice for local readers and authors. I also hope that SMA continues to champion the aspirations of Singapore doctors.**

*A/Prof Poh Kian Keong  
Editor-in-Chief,  
SMJ Editorial Board*



**Membership means being part of a fraternity of medical professionals that promotes the practice of Medicine, and represents or protects members' professional interests.**

**HOW HAS SMA EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?**

SMA has certainly evolved over the years, but we must ask ourselves whether it has also devolved in some respects. By doing some soul searching, we can perhaps improve the image of SMA. This is an important aspect of self-renewal, by searching within ourselves or retreating to remake our own psyche. In that way, we can rise again like a phoenix from the ashes.

*Prof Woo Keng Thye  
SMA Honorary Member*



I hope SMA can provide a background of stability for doctors and their careers, which is fundamental in providing healthcare for society. All too often, I find doctors are taken for granted, and expressions of gratitude are not forthcoming. Instead, the profession is often condemned, which does not help in motivation or encouragement. It leads to poor morale among doctors. The profession has to have an element of honour. It has to provide stability through times of trouble.

*Dr Amy Stebbings  
Vice Chairperson, 2014 SMA National Medical  
Convention Organising Committee*

As I have always been fascinated by the art of winemaking and enjoyed the fruit of their creation, I wanted to share my passion and enthusiasm with fellow colleagues. What better way to do it other than the SMA platform?

*Dr Andrew YH Chin  
Chairman, Wine  
Appreciation Chapter*



**Young doctors should join SMA as their voices add vibrancy and current relevance, which is essential for collective wisdom. Involvement in SMA ensures that your views are properly represented, and is a most satisfying experience.**

*Dr Peter Loke  
Faculty Member,  
Centre for Medical Ethics &  
Professionalism (CMEP)*





*Dr Low Lip Ping  
SMA Past President*

**I hope SMA will review its vision and mission to bring itself up to date with the evolving demands in healthcare, and provide expert views and advocacy in matters of medical practice.**

**WHAT DOES SMA MEAN TO YOU?**

SMA is the only medical organisation representing all doctors in Singapore, whether they are senior or junior, whether in the public or private sectors, and whether general or specialist medical practitioners. It provides a platform for discussion of issues common to all physicians and acts as a voice for the medical profession.



*Dr Aung Myint Oo  
SMA Ordinary Member*

**It is an honour and prestige to be part of SMA, which has a long history since 1959 and is a member of the World Medical Association, the Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania, and the Medical Association of South East Asian Nations.**

My involvement with *SMA News* has allowed me to feel the pulse of our medical community through the many articles that we receive. It has also helped me hone my writing and editorial skills, and make new friends through the process. I look forward to contributing more as I move toward the next phase of my career past basic and advanced specialist training (AST).

*Dr Jayant V Iyer  
Member,  
SMA News Editorial Board*



**If doctors have the time and energy, they should get involved with the work of SMA as it is a very rewarding and challenging commitment, which also helps to remove the doldrums of our stressful medical practice.**

*Dr Wong Sin Hee  
Chairperson, Dance Special Interest Group*



# I always have hope for SMA. It is Singapore doctors' professional home, flagship, archive of our professional endeavours, and source of inspiration for best practice, Singapore style.



*A/Prof Goh Lee Gan  
SMA Past President  
Board Member, CMEP*

## WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME FOR CMEP?

Well, it is hard to answer in a few words. The shortest answer is "I was there when the idea of CMEP was mooted". To expand on that: it started in 1999, when A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean was President while I was 1st Vice President, and my remit was to see through the idea that he had energised. There were several like-minded colleagues around, such as Dr T Thirumoorthy, Dr Lim Teck Beng, and a few others who sat on the SMA Complaints Committee.

The idea was to have a centre like CMEP that will help our colleagues because the root of complaints is very often omission rather than commission. Creating a culture of awareness of professionalism was our end in mind. We persuaded Dr Thirumoorthy to be the first Director of CMEP, as he had and still has the most passion for it. The rest is history. CMEP was formed in June 2000 during my term as President of the 41st SMA Council. We must not fail to mention another person, one who had volunteered heaps of time unstintingly in the setup and growth of CMEP through the years, and is a Singaporean staying in faraway Hawaii – Dr Tan Siang Yong, better known as Dr SY Tan.

**Volunteering for SMJ has exposed me to many great primary care projects. I have also stretched my knowledge through working with many enthusiastic friends and writing teams in writing up SMJ's Practice Integration & Life-long Learning series.**

*Dr How Choon How  
Specialty Editor, SMJ Editorial Board*



I would encourage younger doctors to be involved in SMA so that we can strengthen the community and help make a difference. I feel that SMA has done a good job for the local medical fraternity. Active engagement of the general public in medical issues and expectations will be the next logical phase.

*Dr Soh Wah Ngee  
Member, Complaints Committee*

# Becoming an effective medical professional involves collaboration in learning, mentoring and coaching one another in defining and achieving the professional standards in our work.

## WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME FOR THE SMA ETHICS COMMITTEE AND CMEP?

I was recruited to the SMA Ethics and Complaints Committee in 1988 by obstetrician Dr Charles Lim. I had no idea what the work would entail back then. Through my involvement with these committees, I was exposed to complaints and the unprofessional behaviour of doctors in practice.

I stayed on in this area of work as I was seeking the answer to the following question: "We take in the best and brightest of school leavers into the medical profession; why is their performance as doctors, say ten years down the road, mediocre in many instances?" This query has taken me into the most educational, transformational and interesting journey, both at the personal and professional levels.

SMA set up CMEP in 2000, because we did not want to just do the firefighting, but move to "fire prevention" and development of "fireproof materials and professionals". Ten years on, SMA CMEP has run many educational courses that involve more than 3,000 doctors, just in the AST Ethics, Health Law and Professionalism Course. Education works far better than regulation.

*Dr T Thirumoorthy*  
Executive Director, CMEP  
Member, Ethics Committee



Apart from improving my critical analysis skills through the review process, the ability to persevere and good time management are some of the benefits I have gleaned from being on the SMJ Editorial Board.

*Dr Daphne Ang*  
Specialty Editor,  
SMJ Editorial Board

Playing sports together with doctors at various levels of seniority and skills is one of the best ways to cultivate genuine friendships without barriers. You can learn a lot about life and professional practice from them.

*Dr Chng Nai Wee*  
Member,  
Sports & Games Committee





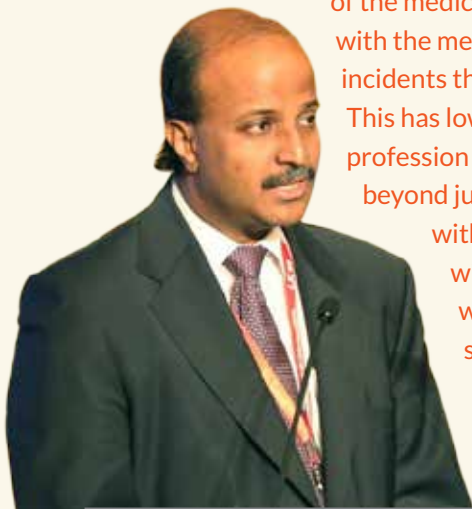
# SMA is a necessity for our doctors. It should continue to flourish with strong leadership.

## WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME FOR SMACF?

I was happy to be involved in SMACF as it gives me an opportunity to help aspiring medical students from less privileged families. We should not have a medical community wholly from well-off families. The funding will also help support our doctors to do charity work in less developed communities in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

*Dr Charles Toh  
SMA Honorary Member  
Director, SMA Charity Fund*

SMA needs to rediscover its role in advocacy. The status of the medical profession in Singapore is near a nadir, with the media constantly harping on scandals and incidents that do not portray Medicine in a good light. This has lowered the morale of junior doctors and the profession as a whole. SMA needs to be proactive – go beyond just highlighting individual doctors, but show with justification that the profession stands with the people of Singapore in rediscovering what makes us a strong, cohesive and healthy society.



*Prof Paul Anantharajah Tambyah  
Member, Doctors in Training (DIT) Committee*

SMA provides a sense of community where doctors can share concerns and support each other. It is the common voice of the profession that still holds service over personal gain.

*Dr Anantham Devanand  
SMA Council Member*



I have enjoyed interacting with my fellow committee members, learning how things work in other restructured hospitals, private hospitals and primary care. The case discussions have been educational and occasionally painful too.

*Dr Diana Tan  
Member, Complaints Committee*



**I now know the sacrifices involved and it really has given me renewed respect for those on the SMA Council whom I know have been giving their time for far longer than I have.**

**WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR SMA?**

That SMA will continue to work to unite the medical profession and support the interests of doctors. It is a challenging time for the profession, as it copes with the demands of medical practice and growing expectations of patients and the public. There is a need to continue working towards maintaining the level of trust and respect that the public has for the medical profession.

*Ms Kuah Boon Theng  
SMA Honorary Legal Advisor*



I love reading and writing, so I am happy that I can serve in a capacity that allows me to do what I like. It is killing two birds with one stone!

*Dr Leong Choon Kit  
Member, SMA News Editorial Board*



If each of us contributes a little, our collective effort will move mountains! SMA has an excellent platform to involve younger members into its work. The young bring energy and ideas to challenge the existing dogma. In contrast, our more experienced members bring experience and their networks to the table. We cannot move forward with only one group of members involved in the work and governance of SMA.

*Dr Wong Sin Yew  
SMA Representative, Ministry of Manpower  
Workplace Safety & Health Council  
(Healthcare) Committee*

Medical training is inherently hierarchical as it is embodied by the master and apprentice relationship. Hence there may be situations where trainees would find it difficult to raise pertinent issues in fear of repercussions. This is where the DIT Committee can help to voice and advocate concerns for junior doctors.

*Dr Chia Ghim Song  
Past Chairperson, DIT Committee*

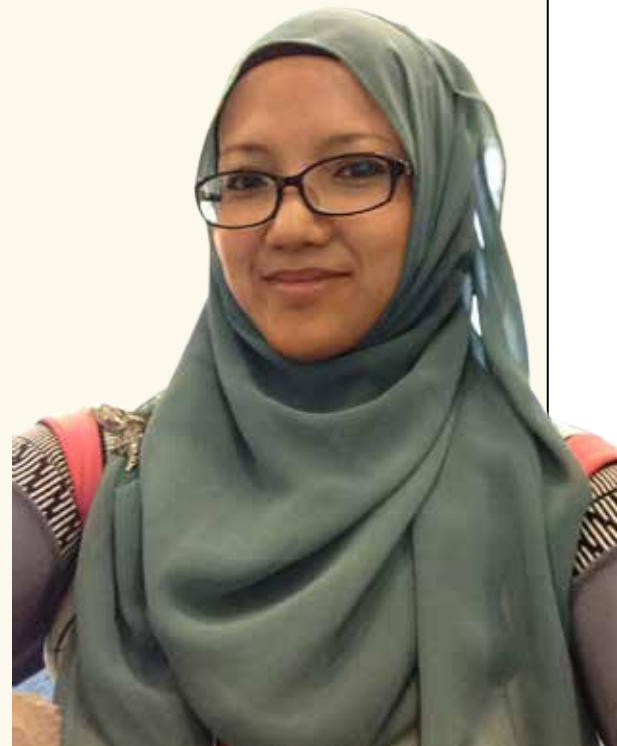


# SMA needs to be the friend that a physician can always rely upon for help and a listening ear.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME ON THE SMJ EDITORIAL BOARD?

I always encourage my peers, junior residents and medical students to question what they have learned, to think independently, and to ask themselves if better solutions can be found for common problems. As an SMJ Editorial Board member, I can extend the same encouragement to new researchers, to help them ask the right questions and express themselves with greater clarity.

*Dr Citra Mattar  
Specialty Editor, SMJ Editorial Board*

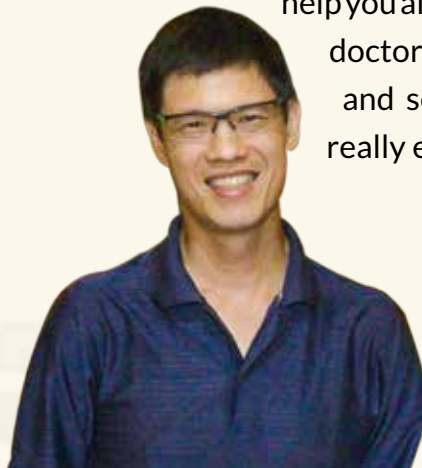


SMA continually innovates with the times. With the experience its members offer, SMA can provide a roadmap for professional development by sharing the best learning strategies and experiences for creation of great doctors.

*Mr Chua Shunjie  
SMA Student Member*

Being involved with SMA's work is not as difficult as you would imagine it to be, because its secretariat is a capable team which will help you along the way. I hope that more doctors will join the Association and see that being part of it will really enrich their lives.

*Dr Chan Kwai Onn  
Member, Sports & Games Committee*



**My hope is that SMA continues to play an active role in educating the general public on health education, conduct more Basic Cardiac Life Support courses and create regular publicity of what SMA can offer in terms of public health education.**

*Mr Goh Teck Koon  
Member, SMA-SNA (Singapore Nurses Association) CPR Training Programme Committee*

