

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.

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Prof Low Cheng Hock

SMA Honorary Member

What does SMA membership 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.

What is your hope for SMA

That SMA membership will grow, so as to gain a credible voice and play an active role in the improvement of healthcare policies for our country. I hope SMA can also help to establish standards of healthcare practice in Singapore. SMA should involve medical students in our activities early, especially those with educational purposes. Hopefully, in time to come, members will not ask what SMA can do for them, but what they can do for their colleagues, patients and the local healthcare system through SMA. I hope to see SMA grow as an organisation with a heart and soul. After all, medical education is education of the heart.

How has SMA evolved over the years?

In the past, SMA was sometimes perceived to be confrontational. However, in recent years, we have evolved to be a partner in total healthcare management for our country. SMA should work closely with our sister organisations and the Ministry of Health (MOH), but when there is the need to comment independently, we should be prepared to share our own view. The bottom line is our work and efforts should be for the good of our patients and our profession. Recently, I feel heartened to see active participation and good articles by our younger colleagues in the *Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ)*, *SMA News* and other discussions. This is a very healthy sign. People are now prepared to speak up for the common good in a frank and honest manner.

Mr Kenneth Leong

SMA Student Member

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

Being a member of SMA, I am constantly updated about the happenings of the medical community. As a medical student, this gives me greater exposure to the medical field and helps to broaden my horizon beyond what I learn in school.

What is your hope for SMA?

That it will continue to promote medical sciences in Singapore and help the medical community keep abreast of developments in the profession, on top of being the voice that represents doctors in Singapore.

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How can SMA help you to become a better doctor?

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.

A/Prof Nigel Tan

SMA Council Member

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

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.

What is your hope for SMA as a Council Member?

My hope as a Council member is for the Association to be more active in advocacy.

How has SMA evolved over the years?

SMA has evolved in terms of its role and representation, and it is more broadly representative of doctors in Singapore now, as compared to 20 years ago.

Dr Chang Ming Yu James

SMA Life Member

What is your hope for SMA?

SMA is already providing leadership in professional matters. I hope that in the future, a mediation centre can be formed to mediate between doctors and disgruntled patients instead of having them go to court. I also hope that SMA will continue to listen to the ground, and have dialogues with MOH and Singapore Medical Council about important issues that affect the profession.

How has SMA evolved over the years?

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*.

A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean

SMA Past President

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

I joined SMA upon my graduation 40 years ago, so as to feel a strong sense of belonging to the medical profession in Singapore. SMA represents the social and professional conscience of our

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medical profession. It is the cauldron where ethical, academic and practice consensus of diverse groups of doctors meet the healthcare demands of patients and of public policies.

What is your hope for SMA?

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.

Mr Lek Siang Pheng

SMA Honorary Legal Advisor

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the SMA Honorary Legal Advisors?

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

My hope is for SMA to continue to be a fearless advocate for both the medical profession as well as patients and the public. This is a necessary role in the present healthcare environment. SMA should also be vigilant to do what it can by way of education, to ensure that the patient-doctor relationship of professional trust and confidence is maintained.

How has volunteering for the SMA Honorary Legal Advisors impacted you personally?

Aside from providing legal advice to the SMA Council from time to time, the one aspect I have enjoyed most is being a member of the Centre for Medical Ethics & Professionalism (CMEP) teaching faculty. Through my work with SMA, I have made friends with various doctors and also kept myself up to date with the changes in medical law and ethics.

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Mr Colin Lim Fung Wan

Director, SMA Charity Fund

What motivated you to volunteer your time for SMACF?

Prof Wong Tien Yin is an old friend, and I could not say no when he asked me to be part of SMACF. At the same time, given the increasing importance of local healthcare for the nation's future, I wholeheartedly support the mission of SMACF to strengthen medical professionalism so as to support the community.

What is your hope for SMACF?

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.

How has volunteering for SMACF impacted you personally?

I have had a better appreciation of the complexities and challenges in the healthcare sector. I have also made many new friends.

A/Prof Poh Kian Keong

Editor-in-Chief, SMJ Editorial Board

What motivated you to volunteer your time on the SMJ Editorial Board?

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

I also hope that SMA continues to champion the aspirations of Singapore doctors.

How has volunteering on the SMJ Editorial Board impacted you personally?

It gives me good insights on the workings of SMJ, in terms of the hard work put into improving each paper and how each Editorial Board member complements each other.

Prof Woo Keng Thye

SMA Honorary Member

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

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

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What is your hope for SMA?

SMA should help members aspire to the higher calling of Medicine.

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.

Dr Amy Stebbings

Vice Chairperson, 2014 SMA National Medical Convention Organising Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the 2014 SMA National Medical Convention?

My main motivation was to give back to society generously what I have learnt through the years. The challenge for me was how to achieve this in the most efficient way, and for people to listen, comprehend, and execute the knowledge they have gained so that effort is not wasted. One has to be very sensitive to the needs of patients, who may not always act in their own best interests.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

Encouragement comprises a mixture of aspirations, hopes, fears, and other emotions. I have learnt from my teachers and mentors to always be encouraging and never put anyone down. This was difficult during my earlier years in the profession as I was striving to carve out a career. As long as you work with someone who has a good attitude, everyone wins. If a person's attitude is poor, nothing will be achieved.

What is your hope for SMA?

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 Andrew YH Chin

Chairman, Wine Appreciation Chapter

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the Wine Appreciation Chapter?

I started enjoying wines while training in Europe eight years ago, and had the privilege to link up with fellow wine enthusiasts in SMA following my return home. 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?

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What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

If you have an interest that will benefit others too, please share it, propagate it and contribute to its advancement. In my case, wines were never meant to be drunk alone, so joining the Wine Appreciation Chapter was a perfect reason to share and multiply the joy.

What is your hope for SMA?

For SMA to be the first thing on every Singapore doctor's mind when they think about connecting with fellow colleagues.

How has volunteering for the Wine Appreciation Chapter impacted you personally?

I have made new friends, learnt new things and appreciated life beyond Medicine.

Dr Peter Loke

Member, Centre for Medical Ethics & Professionalism (CMEP)

What motivated you to volunteer your time for CMEP?

I believe we must strive towards higher levels of professionalism, and CMEP activities fill many of these gaps. I am thankful to be a small part of these efforts.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope SMA will be recognised, by society and the medical profession, as the moral compass and heartbeat of a caring medical landscape that is able to fairly protect the interests of all.

How has volunteering for CMEP impacted you personally?

It has enabled me to better reflect on what professional practice really entails, and inspired me to continually seek that improvement in myself.

Dr Low Lip Ping

SMA Past President

What does SMA Membership 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.

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What is your hope for SMA?

My hope is that SMA will continue to play an active and important role in enabling doctors in Singapore to provide the highest standards of healthcare to their patients and the community at large.

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. For example, there is an urgent need to provide doctors in private practice, especially GPs, with a platform for dealing with medical errors and fostering a just culture in the community for this area of healthcare.

I would also like to see documentation of a detailed history for SMA as the Association evolves, so that it can be regularly updated by those who have been involved in the work of SMA.

How has SMA evolved over the years?

Over the years, SMA has evolved from an organisation led mainly by more senior members of the profession concerned with ethical standards and the standing of the profession, to one that now involves a younger generation with better perception of the practical issues facing medical practice today. I am heartened to see that SMA is more vocal and forthcoming in expressing its views too.

What was your fondest memory during your term as an SMA President?

The year I was SMA President, I was also the President of the Singapore Cardiac Society, Scientific Chairman of the ASEAN Federation of Cardiology Congress held in Singapore, and Vice Chairman of the Singapore National Heart Association. On top of that, I had just started my private medical practice. As I had such a hectic schedule back then, everything passed by in a blur and I can only recall that that was a particularly stressful period of time. I have fond memories from the 21 years I served on the SMA Council and contributed to the development of SMA. I recall in particular the satisfaction of coming up with a recommended schedule of fees that MOH accepted for many years as a reference for medical fees charged by in private medical practices, as well as the pioneering of CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training.

Dr Aung Myint Oo

SMA Ordinary Member

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

I wish for the SMJ impact factor to rise, and for SMA members to enjoy more electronic medical resources in the future.

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How has SMA evolved over the years?

The SMA membership has been growing annually. Besides that, the ethics course that SMA conducts for advanced specialist training programme and Family Medicine trainees is now an essential course before they take their exit exams and become a specialist in Singapore.

Dr Jayant V Iyer

Member, *SMA News* Editorial Board

What motivated you to volunteer your time on the SMJ Editorial Board?

SMA News provides a platform for doctors across various specialties and levels of experience or seniority. When I initially started penning articles for *SMA News* as a medical officer (MO) straight after serving my National Service, I was eager to write on some issues faced by doctors at my practice level. Besides providing a platform for doctors to vent and register feedback, *SMA News* also serves as a great place for one to write and read about various humanitarian missions organised by fellow medical professionals or students. Readers can also get suggestions on how to take the chill pill through travel pieces. All the aforementioned perks, including a great team to work with, motivated me to become part of and continue staying in the *SMA News* Editorial Board.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope SMA plays an even more vocal and active role in airing local doctors' concerns over time. I am hopeful that SMA can indeed be the representative voice of our medical fraternity so that we are consulted on policy decisions and able to collectively make known our opinions on various decisions that will affect our practice or patients.

How has volunteering on the SMA News Editorial Board impacted you personally?

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 Wong Sin Hee

Chairperson, Dance Special Interest Group (SIG)

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the Dance SIG?

My passion for ballroom dancing, and the desire to encourage doctors to dance and put what they have learnt into practice. SMA's Dance SIG provides the ideal avenue to achieve this goal.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

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.

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What is your hope for SMA?

My only aspiration is that more young doctors will participate in SMA's dance sessions and continue supporting our functions. We may have different dance teachers and schools, but we should all come together as a united SMA Dance SIG.

How has volunteering for the SMA Dance SIG impacted you personally?

I have enjoyed my participation in this SMA SIG, and made many wonderful friends. There are many doctors out there who are great dancers. All they need is a common place to get together and enjoy their passion for ballroom dancing, and I believe that SMA Dance SIG is an ideal breeding ground.

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

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. SMA has been standing up for doctors all these while and will continue to do them if the actions are meaningful. The fact that I served many years in several SMA Councils is testimony of my hope for SMA – to be a beacon for the Singapore medical profession.

How has volunteering for CMEP impacted you personally?

Volunteering for CMEP has always impacted me positively. The collegiate debates on medical ethics and professionalism issues of the day, the revelation of wit, passion and professionalism are what we get in return for our volunteering efforts. We get back a lot more than what we put in. Hence, I would say that volunteering for CMEP is a meaningful professional engagement!

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Dr How Choon How

Specialty Editor, SMJ Editorial Board

What motivated you to volunteer your time on the SMJ Editorial Board?

I was honoured to be invited by the previous SMJ Editor Prof Teo Eng Kiong, to help with Family Medicine submissions and coordinate a continuing medical education series for my busy friends and peers.

What is your hope for SMA?

My hope is for SMA to continue to grow and bond our medical community, to be the place that transcends disciplinary, institutional and practice lines to bring us together as friends.

How has volunteering on the SMJ Editorial Board impacted you personally?

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 Soh Wah Ngee

Member, Complaints Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the Complaints Committee?

I was a member of the 44th and 45th SMA Council, and have been contributing as a member of the SMA Complaints Committee since then. I joined the committee to provide relevant feedback from the family physician's perspective. It is also my chance to learn and give back to the community.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

I would encourage younger doctors to be involved in SMA so that we can strengthen the community and help make a difference.

What is your hope for SMA?

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.

How has volunteering for the Complaints Committee impacted you personally?

Most of the complaint cases seem to be arising from poor communication and unmet patient expectations. I have thus learnt to be more attentive to the ideas, concerns and expectations of both patients and their family members in my own medical practice as well.

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Dr T Thirumoorthy

Executive Director, CMEP

Member, Ethics Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the 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. The SMA President and Chairman of the Ethics Committee at that time was Dr N K Yong (my surgical professor). 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 June 2000, because we did not want to just do the firefighting, but move to “fire prevention” and development of “fireproof materials and professionals”. More than ten years on, SMA CMEP has run many educational courses that involve more than 3,000 doctors. For the AST Ethics, Health Law and Professionalism Course alone, over 1,900 doctors have benefitted from the educational process. It is our belief that education works far better than regulation in promoting professionalism.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

Doctors should join and participate in professional bodies like SMA as that is the natural thing to do. Becoming an effective medical professional involves collaboration in learning, mentoring and coaching one another in defining and achieving the professional standards in our work. We can only get good things (benefits) out from a professional body when we are prepared to put in good things for the organisation. As the saying goes, “No input, no output”.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope that we can eradicate two major maladies from the medical profession that are impeding our progress to serve patients and society – apathy in professional governance and a weak collegial culture. The profession has to embark on dedicated work to acquire the knowledge, framework and moral courage to be proactive in its professional governance. There may be many leaders in Medicine but at the same time, Medicine today lacks effective leadership. We need to work smart in eliminating the public versus private divide, the cluster divide, the speciality divide and turf guarding, so as to truly provide patient-centred healthcare.

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Dr Daphne Ang

Specialty Editor, SMJ Editorial Board

What motivated you to volunteer your time on the SMJ Editorial Board?

The chance for me to be part of an editorial team that is responsible for a local journal's manuscript review process was an opportunity too good to refuse, especially since SMJ carries articles that cover a broad range of topics and is therefore relevant to a wide network of physicians both within Singapore and regionally.

What is your hope for SMA?

It is my fervent hope that SMJ will continue to attract high quality articles from various medical and surgical disciplines. This can be made possible by maintaining a rigorous review process with strict timelines and a rapid turnover time. I also hope that the journal will serve as a useful platform for providing up-to-date clinical information for the busy clinician. Over the years, SMJ has continually improved its standards and I hope that we will be able to continuously increase our impact factor with time.

How has volunteering on the SMJ Editorial Board impacted you personally?

Different reviewers' comments for each manuscript has allowed me to reappraise each article from diverse perspectives. 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 Chng Nai Wee

Member, Sports & Games Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the Sports & Games Committee?

My predecessors, Dr Tan Yew Ghee, Dr Chee Weng Sun, Dr Chia Yih Woei and Dr Michael Tan, have been arranging soccer matches for doctors at Alexandra Hospital for three decades. Hence, when they were too busy, I volunteered to help out to return the favour.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

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. The young Dr William Kristano has since stepped up as incoming chairperson for the SMA soccer team.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope SMA will take in new graduate doctors as members for free, and be an increasingly inclusive and emphatic voice for medical practitioners.

How has volunteering for the Sports & Games Committee impacted you personally?

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It was worthwhile co-organising three years of inter-hospital soccer tournaments at Jalan Besar Stadium. I have also gained a lot of wonderful friendships with younger doctors who are soccer enthusiasts. These relationships are especially meaningful and special.

Dr Charles Toh

SMA Honorary Member
Director, SMA Charity Fund

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 (ASEAN).

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

I would like to see some of our doctors give their time to do medical missionary work in Singapore and other underdeveloped countries, especially within ASEAN.

What is your hope for SMA?

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

How has volunteering for SMACF impacted you personally?

Volunteering for SMACF has given me a lot of satisfaction. I hope to see it expanding over the years.

Prof Paul Anantharajah Tambyah

Member, Doctors in Training (DIT) Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the DIT Committee?

I strongly believe that DITs in Singapore are getting a raw deal. With the constant changes in postgraduate education, there is a lot of uncertainty and this has a negative effect on the training of young doctors. Many of us were well trained by dedicated and respected clinicians who were able to tailor training to our strengths and where we would fit in to the institutions. Some of us, like me, trained overseas but still kept in touch with mentors in Singapore. A lot of that culture is lost today and they need to be rediscovered, or its impact on Singapore Medicine could potentially be devastating.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

SMA is the only independent professional voice for young doctors. It has a track record – when you look at your call allowance, you need to remember that before the actions of the SMA DIT Committee, there was no such thing as a house officer call allowance and MOs were only paid after the fourth call. If you want things to change for the better, we need to speak up as one collective voice for the future of the profession in Singapore.

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What is your hope for SMA?

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.

How has volunteering for the DIT Committee impacted you personally?

We have not met for some time! I wish we could as I have enjoyed interacting with junior doctors who are on the committee, talking about the issues they face and sharing lessons gained from the battles of yesteryear.

Dr Anantham Devanand

SMA Council Member

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

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.

What is your hope for SMA as a Council Member?

Increased engagement with the profession. SMA has the potential to break down institutional silos, and private and public sector divides. We can do a lot more for our patients together.

How has SMA evolved over the years?

What is really impressive is SMA's ability to retain the sense of tradition while tackling current issues. The SMA Lecture series is a remarkable example of this.

Dr Diana Tan

Member, Complaints Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the Complaints Committee?

I switched to hospital administration in 2005 to broaden my learning. Dr Wong Chiang Yin encouraged me to join the Complaints Committee then and I've stayed on since.

What is your hope for SMA?

That SMA will continue to represent and guide doctors in the major challenges we face, and also provide good training through seminars and courses.

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How has volunteering for the Complaints Committee impacted you personally?

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.

Ms Kuah Boon Theng

SMA Honorary Legal Advisor

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the SMA Honorary Legal Advisors?

I was asked to join as an SMA Honorary Legal Advisor, and agreed because it was a privilege and honour to have been asked.

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.

How has volunteering for the SMA Honorary Legal Advisors impacted you personally?

On a personal level, I got to make good friends, people who I have the great respect for. They have put in many years of dedicated service in the interests of their professional colleagues. It is not easy to consistently set aside time from one's busy professional career, to serve their profession without expecting any reward.

Seeing the example set by the SMA Council members have in a way inspired me to become a Law Society Council member, albeit rather late in my career! 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.

Dr Leong Choon Kit

Member, SMA News Editorial Board

What motivated you to volunteer your time on the SMA News Editorial Board?

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!

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

Doctoring is a profession. Being a professional involves being there to help fellow colleagues without expecting any returns. I would like to encourage everyone to be an SMA member and their respective professional body. The benefits and returns, or the lack of, should not prevent one from being a member. My father was a professional laundry man. He always spoke proudly of being a

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member of their professional association even though he had not derived any benefits nor needed any help from them.

How has volunteering on the SMA News Editorial Board impacted you personally?

I enjoy reading the articles in *SMA News* more now, since I am involved in the editorial process. The satisfaction and joy that I have gained is immense. I hope to contribute more in the future by giving an even broader perspective to the articles featured in *SMA News*, in order to cater to all the doctors in Singapore.

Dr Chia Ghim Song

Past Chairperson, DIT Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the DIT 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.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

There are not many platforms available in the local medical sector that specifically serve junior doctors, from residents to BST/AST trainees to non-training MOs. As long as you are passionate about issues concerning DITs and want to advocate for changes to improve training conditions or the well-being of junior doctors, step forward.

What is your hope for SMA?

To continue to represent doctors in Singapore and be the voice of profession, so as to enable doctors to provide the best possible care and serve in the best interest of our patients.

How has volunteering for the DIT Committee impacted you personally?

During my time in the DIT committee, I had the privilege of meeting many fellow junior doctors and forming many lasting friendships.

Dr Wong Sin Yew

SMA Representative, Ministry of Manpower (MOM) Workplace Safety & Health Council (Healthcare) Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for this committee?

When my clinics completed the bizSafe Level 3 certification, I was surprised that we were one of the few clinics who had done so. After my clinic at Gleneagles Hospital successfully completed its Joint Commission International accreditation, I was asked by the SMA Council to serve on this committee. My motivation was the ability to help my SMA colleagues to reduce the perceived difficulty (and pain) of ensuring workplace safety and health in their clinic practices.

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What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

My three wishes are all interrelated, so here goes.

SMA must continually enhance collegiality between its newer and more experienced members through increased interactions, whether through SMA lectures, courses or social events. This enhanced interaction will allow SMA to speak with one voice for our medical profession.

Secondly, SMA needs to take deliberate and visible steps to increase public trust. We can do this by focusing on improving the health of Singaporeans and not just voicing the concerns of the local medical profession.

Thirdly, SMA needs to enhance its interaction with the healthcare regulators in Singapore. At the moment, SMA participates but has not been formally involved in the management of our health system. Hopefully, the movers in our government will view SMA as more than just a trade association.

How has volunteering for the MOM Workplace Safety & Health Council (Healthcare) Committee impacted you personally?

Volunteering your time (with your spouse's approval) generally brings satisfaction and a sense of achievement. For the MOM Workplace Safety & Health Council (Healthcare) committee, its main focus is on the small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) of healthcare. This dovetails well with most SMA members as the majority of their clinic practices will be classified as SMEs.

Dr Citra Mattar

Specialty Editor, SMJ Editorial Board

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope SMA will continue to work closely with physicians in Singapore and assist them in areas easily overlooked in the frenzy of everyday life, like getting recertification done on time, providing a round-

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the-clock helpline for those who need legal advice, and offering workshops for those who need them. SMA needs to be the friend that a physician can always rely upon for help and a listening ear.

How has volunteering on the SMJ Editorial Board impacted you personally?

My experience of reviewing numerous papers as a specialty editor has highlighted the importance of thinking about commonly encountered medical conditions in novel ways, because there are many ways of looking at the same problem. Hence, one should not assume that well-established medical practices cannot be improved upon.

Mr Chua Shunjie

SMA Student Member

What does SMA Membership mean to you?

SMA is a big family to me. I get to learn from senior members on how to provide care for my future patients. I can share what I have discovered and enhance knowledge for better patient outcomes within the medical community.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope SMA will continue to advance the local medical community to provide effective care not just for our nation and region, but contribute to global healthcare through impactful research.

How can SMA help you to become a better doctor?

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.

Dr Chan Kwai Onn

Member, Sports & Games Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the Sports & Games Committee?

Golf has been a passion of mine for many years, and I am happy to be able to help SMA through the sport.

What would you say to encourage younger members to get involved with the work of SMA?

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.

What is your hope for SMA?

I hope that more doctors will join the Association and see that being part of it will really enrich their lives.

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How has volunteering with SMA impacted you personally?

I have made friends who I would otherwise not have the chance to meet through SMA.

Mr Goh Teck Koon

Member, SMA-SNA (Singapore Nurses Association) CPR Training Programme Committee

What motivated you to volunteer your time for the SMA-SNA CPR Programme?

To answer our national call to train as many Singaporean as possible in CPR lifesaving skill, so that more lives can be saved in situations involving cardiac arrest, either in the community or at any of our healthcare institutions.

What is your hope for SMA?

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.

How has volunteering for the SMA-SNA CPR Training impacted you personally?

I am very happy to volunteer for the SMA-SNA CPR training programmes. It provides me with an avenue to meet people and understand their reasons for learning CPR lifesaving skills. Besides that, volunteering for the SMA-SNA CPR Training also serves as an avenue for me to meet and interact with our Basic Cardiac Life Support trainers.

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