

The EDITORS' MUSINGS



Tan Yia Swam

Editor

Dr Tan is thankful to KK Women's and Children's Hospital, Department of Breast Surgery, especially her head of department and the division chairman, for the past five years' experience and opportunities. Starting May 2019, she will be venturing into private practice. Meanwhile, she still juggles the commitments of being a doctor, a wife, the *SMA News* Editor and a mother of three. She also tries to keep time aside for herself and friends, both old and new.

Does 2019 mark the death of the doctor-patient relationship?

Unless you have been completely off the grid, you must have some inkling why.

I hear of disillusioned, jaded doctors. I hear friends sharing how disheartened they are. I see keyboard warriors. I see opportunists rising up and taking credit for others' work.

Yet, there is still hope – we have doctors who genuinely care and doctors who speak up. There also seems to be some kind of leadership and some form of engagement. By the time this comes out in print, there would have been several town hall meetings held by the review workgroup appointed by the Ministry of Health. I hope that interested doctors have made time to attend and participate in the discussions.

Let's not hide behind anonymity or allow apathy to set in.

However, work life is not all bleak. The overwhelming majority of patients still have trust and faith in us healthcare workers. As healthcare gets more complicated, it behooves us to know the system well and be the guide for our patients. **Know when to refer, how to refer, and where to refer to.** If we are lost in the complexity of the various electronic platforms versus paper forms, and all the various subspecialty departments, just imagine how much more bewildering it is for our patients.

For this issue, we have decided to have a closer look at complementary medicine – how can we provide good advice for our patients when we know so little about alternative treatments? Know the facts and the myths, and guide our patients in their journeys to getting well.

When the term “complementary medicine” is mentioned, what comes to your mind? Do you think of traditional methods such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), *Jamu* and *Ayurveda*, or other systems such as homeopathy and naturopathy?

As a family physician seeing patients in the polyclinics, I witness first-hand the widespread use of complementary medicine, and discussing its use with patients requires tact and professionalism. I have patients who choose to take TCM tablets in the management of chronic conditions like diabetes mellitus and hypertension (some regrettably forgoing the medications that have been prescribed by their doctors). On the other hand, patients inflicted with severe and potentially fatal medical conditions such as cancers or organ failure could also turn to complementary medicine in a bid to cure their conditions.

In this issue on integrating complementary medicine into clinical practice, we have put together an exciting array of articles to shed light on complementary medicine, a topic so commonly encountered in daily clinical practice yet remains shrouded in mystery.

In the Feature, we are privileged to have Dr Linn Yeh Ching, senior consultant haematologist at Singapore General Hospital, share her insights on the perceived and real adverse effects of TCM. Dr Lambert Low, consultant psychiatrist with the National Addictions Management Service at the Institute of Mental Health, writes about his unique experience on the use of acupuncture in managing addictions. Revolving around the topic of pain management, Dr Bernard Lee MK, consultant anaesthesiologist and pain physician at the Singapore Paincare Centre, provides

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Guest Editor

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insights on pain management and its various strategies.

There is a Chinese saying that goes, “医者父母心”, which suggests that practitioners of medicine should care for and regard their patients just like how parents would for their children. This quote constantly reminds me to give my best to my patients. With that, sit back and enjoy this issue! ♦