



The EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Dr Tina Tan

Editor

Dr Tan is a psychiatrist with the Better Life Psychological Medicine Clinic, and a visiting consultant at the Institute of Mental Health. She is also an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. Between work and family life, she squeezes time out for her favourite pastimes – reading a good (fiction) book and writing.

I was getting lunch the other day when I heard a pleasant and chirpy recording over the mall's speakers reminding shoppers to sanitise our hands, use TraceTogether and keep to safe distancing rules. It felt like I was in one of those sci-fi movies where, to set the scene for audiences, the introduction features announcements to the population as they went about their daily business (*cue eerie post-apocalyptic music*). I also happened to spot a group of Safe Distancing Ambassadors getting ready to fan out through the mall on their "patrols". This is our present, and likely our future for the near-term. All these were unheard of one year ago.

By the time this issue is out, and in the hands (or devices) of readers, Singapore would have crossed the

one-year milestone since the first COVID-19 case hit our shores and turned our world upside down. How much our world has changed! It is hence a good opportunity to look back on 2020 and ask: "What has this year-long battle against the pandemic taught us? And how can we use these lessons moving forward?"

I'm hoping that by now we are safely into Phase 3, with vaccines being given based on the Government's prioritisation strategy, though we know how fluid the situation can be. While vaccines are game changers, they aren't exactly silver bullets, despite the world spending most of 2020 holding its breath for them. It's also particularly interesting to me that the COVID-19 vaccines make use of mRNA technology. In that vein, do read Dr Leong Hoe Nam's commentary on the use of vaccines against COVID-19.

One of our missions at *SMA News* is to diligently record as much as we can about how COVID-19 has impacted our lives and changed our practices for the benefit of future generations to come, just as our predecessors did for SARS. On that note, we wish to acknowledge the Ministry of Health for their efforts in this time of national (and international) crisis. No matter our political differences, or our

own personal critique that "things could have been done better", it is extremely hard to argue that any of us could have done better with the mammoth undertaking of bringing the virus under control, especially under the same circumstances.

This issue also features Dr Ivan Low's experience in designing and implementing the Mobile Swabbing Station, which made waves during Singapore's deluge of infections in the dormitories. In addition, I'm honoured to have Prof Leo Yee Sin and Adj A/Prof Matthias Toh's reflections on COVID-19. Incidentally, did you know that Prof Leo is on the *BBC 100 Women 2020* list, right next to Michelle Yeoh?

Lastly, for those of us who have had to forego our annual year-end vacation and are feeling a little bored and claustrophobic, do have a read of Dr Chie Zhi Ying's "travel" article, where she takes us on an adventure right here in Singapore.

Let us soldier on and face what 2021 has in store for us. Take care, everyone. ♦