

Changes and Challenges

By Dr Wong Tien Yin, SMA News Editor

I would like to welcome you to a new issue of the SMA News. I would also like to introduce you to a new Editorial Board. Although most of them are probably familiar faces, they are briefly profiled here. You will observe that the Board consists of an eclectic group, and spans the range of family practice physicians to specialist surgeons, of those who work in the public to private sector, and of younger doctors to senior members of our profession. This, of course, reflects the membership mix of the SMA, but more important, the diversity will hopefully result in a newsletter that represents the voice and meets the needs of the entire membership.

A change in Editor and Editorial Board also brings about a chance to re-examine the objectives and direction of the SMA News. What indeed is our objective? As the official newsletter of the Singapore Medical Association, the most apparent aim must be to communicate to our members on news and activities affecting the medical profession. Thus, a major feature of the News is to report on the monthly activities of the SMA and the medical profession.

However, the SMA News will offer more than direct factual reporting of medical events. An important direction of the News will be to critically address the most current, relevant and important issues affecting our profession today. Every day, we face new challenges that may potentially affect, for better or worse, the health care profession and the way doctors practice medicine. However controversial, we are committed to covering these issues, and provide a forum for the discussion of these challenges.

The United Medical Protection crisis is the most glaring example of an "international crisis" facing our profession this month. Thus, the Feature article in this issue of SMA News is focused on medical defense, the events that led to this crisis and the response of the SMA. A broader look at medical defense is also presented. A more "local crisis" is the public health problems surrounding over-the-counter health supplements products. In future issues, we will discuss the controversy relating to the business of organ transplantation in Singapore, how the Life Science research initiative has affected the medical profession, and

the need for a re-thinking of continuing medical education. We invite you, as readers and members of the SMA, to contribute actively to your newsletter. If the topic is relevant, if it affects medical practice, if it provokes discussion, if it invites debate, if it is related to our health care system and practice, we will consider publishing it.

Finally, I would like to express our appreciation to the previous Editor, Deputy Editor, and members of Editorial Board for their contributions to SMA News. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the vision, energy and drive of Associate Professor Cheong Pak Yean, our previous Editor, and Associate Professor Goh Lee Gan, our previous Deputy Editor. Under their leadership, the News has gone from strength to strength and is now a "must-read" for all doctors every month. In a sense, the outstanding achievements of the previous SMA News team may have made it so much easier for us. At the same time, the previous success has made the path so much more difficult for the new team to emulate and improve on. It is a challenge that we relish! ■

SMA NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD 2002/2003

Dr Wong Tien Yin (MBBS, 1992), Editor, is an Ophthalmologist who enjoys clinical medicine and academic research, but would in fact rather spend his time thinking, talking and writing about the range of issues that affect the medical profession in Singapore. As an alternative, he accepted the invitation to be Editor of SMA News, so that he has a legitimate excuse to think, talk and write about these issues, and ask other people to do likewise.

Dr Daniel Fung (MBBS, 1990), Deputy Editor, works as a full-time father of 5 children. He has many hobbies and his current passion is Child Psychiatry which he practises at the Child Guidance Clinic. He is often teased about his other hobby of supporting the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club.

Dr Chan Kah Poon (MBBS, 1968) spends most of his time day-dreaming because it is not restrained by time or place and no training is necessary or equipment is required. It is not offensive to others, non-polluting, costs nothing and best of all, anything goes. Occasionally, he is interrupted by people who claim to be unwell.

Professor Chee Yam Cheng (MBBS, 1973) is Clinical Professor of Medicine, NUS Faculty of Medicine, Chairman of Medical Board, Chief of Staff, TTSH, Head of General Medicine, TTSH, and Director, Quality Management, TTSH. He loves to treat patients but finds less and less time to do so. Administration work is not that boring, but can be quite frustrating. On the other hand, someone has to do the job and make others happy (if that is at all possible). Teaching doctors is always fun, and examining them is even more so. Birds and fish are his past-times and travelling has been added to his timetable.

Dr Jon Goh (MBBS, 1984) is part-time writer, part-time audio, video and techno fanatic, in between his day job as Eye Surgeon at the Singapore National Eye Centre. He will be contributing a regular column called “The Hobbyist” and some excerpts from his unpublished novels of the “Frasier” genre.

Dr Lee Pheng Soon (MBBS, 1982) has worked as a Pharmaceutical Physician in the R&D departments of European and US companies for more than 15 years. During this time, he has also practiced in a small rural GP clinic in his spare time, as a hobby. There, his patients teach him new swear words in dialect – which is politically very correct, as it is rude to swear in Mandarin. Both the international outlook and the new vocabulary, from the job and the hobby respectively, have turned out very useful in the SMA, where he is currently the longest-serving Council Member.

Dr Terence Lim (MBBS, 2000) is currently serving time as a Medical Officer in a tertiary hospital. He is a compulsive book buyer who writes mostly when he is in a foul mood. Favourite fantasies of his include being published in National Geographic and The New Yorker, as well as retiring at 35.

Dr Oh Jen Jen’s (MBBS, 1999) love for writing had its humble beginnings in secondary school, thanks to an intuitive English teacher. Currently a 3rd Year Medical Officer, she loves to swap horror stories with fellow junior doctors.

Dr Toh Han Chong (MBBChir, 1989) is a Consultant Medical Oncologist at the National Cancer Centre. He has evolved from being editor of a quite radical and liberal student newspaper to editing a logical and whimsical university magazine, and now finally, to the clinical and hopefully, irresistible SMA News. His reading list currently includes Dr Seuss, The Pokemon Adventures and The New Paper, and his creative influences include Jack Neo, Zhang Yimou and James Joyce.