

# Editor's Words

by Dr Fok Wai Yee Rose, Editorial Member and Dr Low Sher Guan Luke, FCFP(S), Editor

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2017 promises to be a world of change for the healthcare sector. It began with a well-coordinated release of “big” news of re-organisation of the public healthcare sector by re-clustering from 6 to 3 regional health systems. This resulted in “big” change, resulting in a flurry of activities and a myriad of meetings and retreats to ensure smooth transition.

Once again we commemorate World Family Doctors Day on May 19, 2017, a day to highlight the role and contributions of family doctors working in different capacities and diverse health care systems around the world. It is appropriate on this day that we continue to support education and training in our own Family Medicine Review Course 2017 which provides a platform and opportunity to learn and refresh, as well as to establish and strengthen fraternal ties with both within the primary care community and our hospitalist specialist colleagues.

At the World Family Doctors’ Day Dinner, the guest of honour, Mr Chan Heng Kee, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health, highlighted the importance of Family Medicine as its complexity and importance grows. He also pointed out the challenges facing our fraternity, namely the “Three integration challenges, which are integrating across physical and mental health, integrating across care settings and integrating across professions.

A/Prof Lee Kheng Hock, our College President shared the report of the “FAMily Medicine for OUr Singapore” (FAMOUS) project which cited the challenges to the practice of family medicine, teaching and research, satisfaction and relationship with patients. The themes that emerged in the Focus Group revealed very interesting insights into the aspirations and angst among the different groups, from residents and students to family physicians working in polyclinics to private practice and in community hospitals. It is appropriate for the dinner to end with the presentation of the College Teachers Award and the Distinguished Educator’s Award. One recipient, Dr Eng Soo Kiang, shared that the drivers for his commitment to teaching is that he is a strong believer in Peer Assisted Learning and he values the collegiality teaching sessions foster.

In the midst of taking care of our patients, it is needful to emphasize on Physician Self Care: On

Mental Health – primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Physicians are urged to seek help whenever needed and not to be ashamed when it comes to their mental health.

Family medicine is one discipline in many settings and has moved from beyond the traditional GP and polyclinic setting into new areas of collaboration in line with our three integration challenges. Our interview sections seek to showcase the relevance and importance of family medicine in nursing homes (integrating across care settings) as well as in the Institute of Mental Health (integrating across professions and mental health).

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to A/Prof Goh Lee Gan on his recipient of the SMA Honorary Membership Award. He was lauded as a composite of three areas of achievement – servant-leader, academic leader, and practitioner-healer.

Finally is change necessary? Why now and not later? There will never be a right time and a right reason for change. It is an inevitable part of life, families, systems and organisations. However what we can do right is to make the change a positive experience, having an open mind, a collaborative spirit and a determination to make it happen to achieve the desired goal.

To me, this change presents a golden opportunity for the advancement of Family Medicine. As the practice of medicine becomes more complex with increasing sub-specialization resulting in fragmentation of care, there is now a greater role of the broad based training of family physicians both in the community, ILTC and restructured hospitals. Many aspiring family medicine trainees have been challenged by the breath of family medicine but it is this same diversity in scope that has attracted many of our veterans family physicians to this discipline.

One family doctor aptly said that ultimately what he desire as a family doctor is to be a good doctor, to be respected by peers and specialists colleagues and trusted to disburse funding to better care for our patients with complex chronic conditions. We can do this by embracing change, leveling up our knowledge and sharpening our clinical skills – for our patients!