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Editor's Words

by Adj Asst Prof Low Sher Guan Luke, FCFP(S), Chief Editor, The College Mirror

On 11 Mar 2020, WHO officially announced that COVID-19 is a pandemic, ringing the alarm bell loud and clear and calling for all countries and healthcare systems to swift action to deal with this pandemic. Now on 11 Mar 2021, this marks the one year anniversary. It is a significant milestone for us in Singapore, where many of us are called to arms to fight this pandemic.

There is a saying that there are some decades that felt like months, and there are some months that felt like decades. The past year of COVID-19 fighting felt like decades to many of us who put in our heart and soul in tandem with our national efforts in bringing COVID-19 infection under control. As a nation, we have rallied to the call and have set up operations centre, dormitory operations, large scale swabbing stations, community care facilities, and now, COVID-19 vaccination centres. Thanks to a coordinated approach between the government, the scientific community and industry partners, Singapore was the first nation in Asia to receive doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on 21 December 2020. This is a strong testimony to the robust system that Singapore has taken decades to build!

Before COVID-19 hit, the community hospitals have all along been taking in business as usual (BAU) patients that required subacute care, rehabilitation or palliative care. But when of COVID-19 hit our shores and the numbers were surging, many of the community hospitals had to rise up to the occasion and help to manage the of COVID-infected patients as well. At its peak, we were managing large groups of migrant workers. Just 2 weeks into opening our 3 wards, we were full house with nearly a hundred patients. But the migrant workers were a lovely bunch. Even though many went through period of uncertainty, fear of job loss, isolation from their families and loved ones, they were still encouraging each other, cheering each other up. When we organised exercise activities for them, they gladly joined in and danced inside the wards! When they were healthy enough to be discharged, our staff would wave them good bye and they would reciprocate back with huge smiles and cheers. It was their deep appreciative and gratitude that really made our days and added spark to our work! That is why we keep doing what we do!

However, it was not healthcare alone that fought the war. The entire nation, our government, the supporting infrastructure, the public and private sectors, all came together to play different but vital roles in keeping Singapore going. Yes, we

have been through tough times, setbacks and challenges, but we have fought the good fight and emerged stronger through it all. This test has forced us to put aside personal differences and to come together to support and complement each other in our national efforts. Friendships have been built. Working relationships have been strengthened. And many Singaporeans have been kept safe through our combined efforts.

But now is not the time to rest on our laurels. As our government seeks to procure sufficient vaccine stocks, it now comes down to each and every single person's responsibility to receive the vaccine and do our part to help build up our population's herd immunity. Yes, it requires the herd mentality, to not only think about personal good, but to consider the bigger collective good for our population, to ensure that we break the chains of transmission by receiving the vaccine and be protected against COVID-19. Our nation's leaders have taken the lead to receive the vaccination and this has resulted in heightened trust in Singaporeans to receive the vaccine likewise. Many healthcare professionals, doctors and nurses, are coming forward to run vaccination centres all over Singapore, to ensure that all of us receive our vaccine in an orderly and timely fashion. It looks smooth like clockwork, but any clock-smith will tell you that when you open up a clock, buried inside is an intricate mesh of cogs and gears and moving parts, moving in unison and harmony to produce a singular clock movement.

So, in this issue, we are bringing many stories from our family physicians, on their experience in fighting against COVID-19 from various perspectives. One of the strategies to maintain safe distancing measures is telemedicine, and we received an article on that. Many family physicians also joined in the Swab-And-Send-Home (SASH) program. Of course, running a GP clinic during a pandemic poses great challenges as well as a certain satisfaction, so we will be hearing from that as well.

Not all our articles are COVID-work related, just so as to give some mix to the spread. We also covered how family physicians can benefit from training in mental health so as to better help such patients in the community. GPs also partner with community hospitals to provide continued and integrated care to the elderly patients after discharge. Vincent also wrote an article in loving memory of his dad. And we have two more articles on pet ownership. Our team hope you will enjoy this issue!

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