

Editor's Words

by Dr Lim Khong Jin Michael, Family Physician, Editor (Team B)

Please allow me to touch on two key concerns that are raised in this issue, “Healthier Sg and an improved standard of care” and “the evolving healthcare ecosystem in Singapore which affect particularly our junior doctors.”

As Dr Janil Puthuchery, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health shared at the 2022 Family Medicine Convocation Ceremony, “under Healthier SG, the vision is for One Family Doctor – One Patient, ... When your patients and their family members encounter any medical issues, they know they can turn to you, safe in the knowledge that they can rely on you to provide the best care possible.”

The concept of one doctor choosing and going to one clinic is not new as pointed out by Dr Lye Tong Fong. When I was a post-graduate student in Wales more than a decade ago, my family was assigned to one clinic near to our accommodation. Our experience taught us that going to one clinic does not automatically translate to better medical care. Good medical care comes about if we are attended to by a knowledgeable, efficient and caring medical team.

It is heartening to see that Healthier Sg is developing and encouraging GPs to be familiar with updated Care Protocols for common as well as complex conditions. As Prof Chong Yap Seng shared, “protocols will support clinical decision making and will be key in ensuring accountability and that critical care elements are consistently carried out by all doctors.” Other than improving the knowledge of GPs, Healthier Sg will also improve the efficiency of our healthcare system. Prof Chong revealed that “Clinical Service Roadmaps for Primary Care are being developed by the Ministry of Health”, for example, appropriate GPs’ referrals to specialists will no longer need to be channeled through Polyclinics in order to qualify for subsidized care.

How do we develop caring medical teams in our healthcare system? One good way is to expose our students and junior doctors

to good models of caring in hospitals, clinics and voluntary organizations such as Crisis Relief Alliance (CRA) and Healthserve. To cite an example, CRA ran a Health Screening and Health Education Booth for migrant workers at Ministry of Manpower’s launch of International Migrants Day on 15 Dec at Pek Kio Community Centre. Medical and nursing student volunteers were surrounded by encouraging doctors and nurses that led by example, smiling and caring for this less privileged community. Twenty-four nursing students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic volunteered for that event, serving cheerfully, kindly and attentively even though they were evidently exhausted from preparing for mid-year examination in the coming week.

Next, I will touch on the evolving healthcare system in Singapore which affect particularly our junior doctors. I started practicing medicine in the hospitals about thirty years ago. When confronted with the issue of increasing burnout of junior doctors these days some of my peers raised the point that doctor-to-patients ratio in the hospital was worse twenty to thirty years ago. This caused me to wonder why is it that there are more junior doctors burning out these days as compared to previously if the doctor-to-patient ratio is improving? I believe one of the key reasons is that the healthcare ecosystem has changed significantly over the years necessitating more time to care for each patient. As you will read in my interview with a junior doctor, some of the changes include (1) an increase in patients’ and their families’ expectations, such as request for regular updates and explanations from doctors, an increase in harassments and complaints when expectations are not met, followed by stressful post-incident interviews and reports, (2) the constant bombarding from documentations, forms filling, emails, meetings, TigerText and Whatsapp messages. Furthermore, morale is low due to the difficulty in obtaining residency compounded by the vastly different treatment and training accorded to those who obtain residency as compared to those who did not. To improve the Junior Doctors’ situation, I think we need a safe

and supportive environment for them to voice the challenges they face.

Let me conclude by suggesting that a better and stronger healthcare system such as Healthier Sg has to stem from Healthier Healthcare Workers. The healthcare ecosystem in Singapore has become a more challenging and demanding environment over the years contributed by some of the reasons I have listed above and the COVID-19 pandemic over the last few years. Let us help one another, especially our juniors, to stay healthy (body, soul and spirit) in order to help others to be healthy too. Press on!

■ CM

CONTENTS

- 01 Cover Story**
FAMILY MEDICINE CONVOCATION 2022
- 02 Editor's Words**
- 06 Sreenivasan Oration 2022**
HEALTHIER SG & FAMILY MEDICINE
BY PROF CHONG YAP SENG
- 09 Albert & Mary Lim Award 2022**
CITATION FOR PROF LEE ENG HIN
- 11 President's Forum**
BY ADJ A/PROF TAN TZE LEE
- 12 Family Medicine Convocation
Ceremony & Dinner 2022**
- 14 Healthier SG**
SINGAPORE'S NEW PREVENTIVE CARE STRATEGY
PUTS PRIMARY CARE AT THE CENTRE OF THE
CARE ECOSYSTEM
- 15 Interview with Dr Darren Chen**
FAMILY PHYSICIAN WORKING IN A NURSING HOME
- 17 Healthier SG**
A GP'S PERSPECTIVE
- 21 Perspective From a Junior Doctor**
INTERVIEW WITH A JUNIOR DOCTOR WORKING
IN LONDON AND SINGAPORE

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FAMILY PRACTICE SKILLS COURSE

Basic Obesity Management Accreditation 2

The College of Family Physicians Singapore would like to thank the Expert Panel for their contribution to the Family Practice Skills Course #103 on “Basic Obesity Management Accreditation 2”, held on 17-18 September 2022.

Expert Panel:

Dr Tham Kwang Wei
Dr Benjamin Lam
Dr Amanda Lim
Ms Izabela Kerna
Dr Ivy Lim

Dr Shanker Pasupathy
Dr Natalie Koh
Dr Elaine Chew
Dr Lee Yingshan
Dr Donna Tan
Dr Suraj Kumar
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Dr Leong Choon Kit

Chairpersons:

Dr Tham Kwang Wei
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Mental Capacity Act

The College of Family Physicians Singapore would like to thank the Expert Panel for their contribution to the CME Webinar on “Mental Capacity Act”, held on 8 Oct 2022.

Expert Panel:

Ms Ruby Lee
Dr Peter Chow Chiu Leung
Dr Giles Tan Ming Yee

Chairperson:

Dr Rachel Lim