

SMC NEWS

Singapore Medical Council

NOVEMBER 2019 • ISSUE 13

www.smc.gov.sg



A New Chapter:
Introducing the new President of
SMC, Professor Chee Yam Cheng

Message from President

Season's greetings to all of you! Welcome to our 13th edition of the SMC News.

The year 2019 has been eventful for the Council with fair share of changes and challenges. In August, I was honoured to be elected by fellow members to lead the Council. It is a heavy responsibility and duty to discharge. There are many tasks at hand and I hope to build on my predecessor, Professor Tan Ser Kiat's excellent work to bring SMC forward in its next phase of growth. In this issue, there is a profile article on me. Read on to get to know me better.

Also in this edition, we bring you highlights of the messages shared at the SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Pledge Ceremony. We would like to thank Mr Amrin Amin, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health, for gracing the event as the Guest of Honour.

It is the time of the year where most registered doctors are required to renew our Practising Certificates (PCs). We would like to remind all fully and conditionally registered doctors whose PCs are expiring on 31 December 2019 to do so before the year ends.

Next year, we will be introducing more changes to improve our processes. We hope to have your strong support for the Council to implement these changes effectively.

On behalf of the Council, we wish all doctors a good year ahead.

Professor Chee Yam Cheng
President, Singapore Medical Council

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Doctors at the SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony, 28 September 2019

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Speech by SMC President, Professor Chee Yam Cheng

Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony

Saturday, 28 September 2019



Professor Chee Yam Cheng addressing the doctors and guests at the ceremony

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our Guest of Honour Mr Amrin, and to be here today to join you at the SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony. I have been a member of the current Council for 2 years and a practising physician since 1973. Today is the first time that I have the honour of addressing you as the President of the SMC.

Unlike me, you are all at the beginning of your careers. There are many years ahead of you, as you undertake fulfilling careers in service of society at large. I wish to take this opportunity to share some observations which I have been fortunate enough to obtain during the course of my medical practice.

The SMC Physician's Pledge which you will be reciting today embodies the essence of the Hippocratic Oath. The Oath upholds the high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct in your management of patients. It is

not merely a ceremonial requirement for full registration as required under the Medical Registration Regulations. When one seriously reflects on the contents of the Oath, one realises that the oath enshrines into our consciousness the collective conscience that as professionals, we have a code of conduct and practice that we should not deviate from.



Doctors taking the Physician's Pledge



SMC members taking the Physician's Pledge with doctors

The medical fraternity has had members gone astray. Doctors have been imprisoned for dishonesty, selling addictive drugs and for sexual offences. Although in these instances it was the courts – not the SMC – which incarcerated them, the offences had repercussions on their fitness to practise eventually. The SMC is entrusted with maintaining professional standards within the medical fraternity, with a view of discharging our obligation to ensure patient safety. Hence, such medical practitioners who were found by the SMC to be guilty of professional misconduct, or have brought disrepute to the profession, have been sanctioned.

Today is a joyous occasion for you, and your families. To stay clear of trouble, and retain your joy in practice, the SMC has sent you an email with a link to the SMC website to access, read and digest, the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines. You can also download the pdf copy. It runs into many pages. There is also an accompanying handbook to help explain its contents. I assure you that the document is not nearly as formidable to read as some of the medical texts you have studied. However, it is as important – if not even more important – as any medical text which you have studied in order to pass an exam. This is because the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines will guide you for as long as you practise.



From left: Professor Lynette Shek (SMC member), A/Prof Ng Kee Chong (CMB, KKH), Dr Sayampanathan Saravaselan (Master, AMS), Adj. A/Prof Raymond Chua (SMC member), Clinical A/Prof Tan Su-Ming (SMC member), Dr Chia Kok Hoong (SMC member), A/Prof Agnes Ng (SMC member), Professor London Lucien Ooi (Chairman TASC, MOH), A/Prof Tay Yong Kwang (Asst DIO, CGH), Dr Leong Choon Kit (SMC member), Dr Wong Tien Hua (Vice-President, CFPS), Dr Lee Yik Voon (President, SMA)

How many of you have read the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines? Maybe not all of you. But as you recite the Pledge with your hands raised, take notice of the third last line of the Pledge which says, "I solemnly pledge to comply with the provisions of the Ethical Code". So it is needful for your own good and peace of mind, that you download and read the Ethical Code and Guidelines and abide by them. For some of you, it could well be the most important textbook of your budding career if it prevents the downfall which unfortunately has befallen some of our colleagues.

How important is the Ethical Code and the Ethical Guidelines in your journey of learning and training? I am informed that Ethics is a compulsory course for lawyers who sit for the Bar exam. Is it important enough in Medicine for our PGY1s to be examined in their knowledge of ethics and to pass it as a compulsory subject? We are mulling over this.

Prevention is better than cure. So instead of putting more and more resources into disciplining doctors, we should channel more resources into educating them.



Doctors at the ceremony

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If you are ethical and professional, you will have the fundamental qualities, and a strong foundation, to be a good doctor.

”

Medical Ethics

The practice of good medicine is both challenging and rewarding. It is hard if you are in this profession for the wrong reasons, it is easier if your heart is in the right place. The core of our practice emanates from ethics and professionalism. If you are ethical and professional, you will have the fundamental qualities, and a strong foundation, to be a good doctor.



Doctors at the ceremony

SMC can publish educative resources, but will doctors have time to read them? So SMC cannot do this alone, it must have the support of our medical schools to choose the right students, to teach ethics and professionalism, to enshrine ethical management in every case discussion. SMC must have the support of our professional bodies and I am pleased to see the Master and the Presidents of our professional bodies, or their representatives, here because they have supported the SMC in many ways. They are in this journey with us to create a better system, with better training and better Continuing Medical Education. These measures will lead to better doctors who will in turn benefit society. Over the decades, the SMC with the professional bodies, the Academy of Medicine Singapore, the College of Family Physicians Singapore and the Singapore Medical Association have worked closely to maintain the competency and quality of our doctors through CME programmes.



Professor Chee Yam Cheng (President, SMC) and A/Prof Benjamin Ong (Registrar, SMC) [sixth from left] with SMC members, staff and Dr Sayampanathan Saravaselan (Master, AMS) [sixth from right]



Doctors at the ceremony

Communications with the SMC

Recent news has put the SMC and the medical profession in the media spotlight. The Medical Council has heard feedback from the ground and will like to reassure you that we are committed to improving our processes and communication with doctors. However, to do so, we as a board comprising mostly volunteers in the Council will need strong support from you, the medical community. The SMC will, as it has always done, review its policies and processes to keep pace with these developments but your participation is key to these developments. And we welcome your active participation.

We also encourage feedback from you. The Council, from time to time, will also be communicating with you through emails, newsletters, circulars and other publications on its work and activities. Information on disciplinary cases will also be made available, and I encourage you to read these and visit our website as part of your broader continuing education journey.

Conclusion

The medical profession will continue to face challenges due to changing demographics and a new healthcare landscape. While as younger doctors you may have many life priorities and challenges, you must not forget that leaders of the future must necessarily arise from the youth of today. Among you present today, are some who will lead the medical fraternity in the future. We encourage those of you who are keen to participate in shaping tomorrow's medical landscape to stand up and be counted. We are looking forward to having younger members in Council. These members will be the future leaders of the medical fraternity.

In closing, may I congratulate you on your achievements. It must be a proud moment for you and your families, to complete your medical education and join the ranks of a very privileged fraternity. On behalf of the Council, I wish all of you a most meaningful and fulfilling medical career ahead.

Thank you.

Speech by Guest-of-Honour Mr Amrin Amin, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health

Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony
Saturday, 28 September 2019



Mr Amrin Amin (SPS, MOH) addressing the doctors and guests at the ceremony

It is my pleasure to be here with you today at the Singapore Medical Council Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony to celebrate the start of your professional career in healthcare.

First, I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to Professor Chee for being elected as the new President of the SMC.

I have confidence that Professor Chee's experience and leadership will enable him to guide the Council, to uphold standards of practice within the medical fraternity and maintain public confidence in the medical profession.

The Physician's Pledge and Patient-Doctor Relationship

The medical profession is a calling, with various milestones and occasions along the way to affirm one's commitment to the duties and responsibilities as a medical practitioner.

The first of these is the white-coat ceremony as a student at the beginning of medical school. Today, you will affirm the Physician's Pledge as newly-minted practising doctors. The oath-taking is a solemn and formal undertaking to use your positions of trust honourably and professionally throughout your career.



From left: A/Prof Tay Yong Kwang (Asst DIO, CGH), A/Prof Kenneth Mak (DDMS HSG, MOH), A/Prof Koh Dow Rhoon (Senior Consultant, PTAS, MOH), Dr Lau Hong Choon (Deputy Registrar, SMC), Mr Amrin Amin (SPS, MOH), Dr Lee Yik Voon (President, SMA), Mrs Joanna Tan (Executive Secretary, SMC), Professor James Donovan Best (Dean of LKCSOM)

It affirms your responsibilities to your patients, the medical profession and society at large. It is also at this pledge taking ceremony that you commit to a life-long process of building trust, and acknowledge your special position as a medical doctor.

Trust is a key element in the patient-doctor relationship. The patient has to trust the doctor to act in their best interest when making clinical decisions. If trust is absent, there would be significant tension and care could be compromised.

Cases of professional misconduct and unethical behaviour highlighted in the media may bring added public scrutiny to the medical profession, but these cases represent a very small minority. The medical fraternity on the whole still upholds the highest standard of practice and professionalism.

The medical community had also expressed concerns regarding recent medico-legal cases, and their implications on practice, especially in the area of obtaining informed consent. At the previous pledge ceremony earlier this year, it was announced that MOH would set up a workgroup to review the issue of informed consent and the SMC's disciplinary processes. I understand that the workgroup will be issuing its recommendations soon. I hope that the recommendations will help build the trust between you and your patient.

We must be vigilant to maintain the moral authority and trust of this esteemed profession. The practice of medicine must return to its roots that are encapsulated in the pledge you are taking today. I am reading these lines - giving respect and gratitude to teachers; practising profession with conscience and dignity; making the health of patient the first consideration; and upholding the honour and noble traditions of the medical profession. These are sacred words and promise that you will have to abide throughout your professional career.

The public's disillusionment with irresponsible conduct of a selected few practitioners should not invalidate the positive values and manner of practice expected of the profession. I would like to encourage all of you, as the newest members of the community to re-commit to the profession's core values of being trustworthy, competent and compassionate. These will form the foundation of your career.

Different Career Pathways

You have graduated in promising and interesting times. The years ahead will bring exciting opportunities but also new challenges to the healthcare sector. The evolving practice environment has also required our doctors to have new domains of knowledge.

“ **Trust is a key element in the patient-doctor relationship. The patient has to trust the doctor to act in their best interest when making clinical decisions.**

”

There are new career pathways for those like you with a basic medical degree to forge ahead, for example, digitalisation, medical informatics and population health. In this eclectic environment, I encourage you to adapt and be a trailblazer in these new domains.

The expansion of new developments in the healthcare sector means we are looking at new career options and longer career spans in your chosen fields. This also means that there is no hurry to rush into a particular specialisation until you are sure of what you want to achieve. Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, Singapore's Chief Health Scientist and Executive Director of the Health Ministry's Office for Healthcare Transformation, in his address to local medical graduates, also echoed the importance of acquiring experience in broad-based medical practice. I encourage you to be open to explore multiple options, and take ownership of your learning experience on new ideas and areas.

This message is not limited to only the newly minted doctors but to all, regardless of seniority and years of service. It is important to re-skill to keep up with new medical research and knowledge. There is also a responsibility for all to be willing teachers and contribute to a positive learning environment in every healthcare institution so that others may also learn.



Doctors at the ceremony

We certainly hope to count on each and every one of the junior doctors present today to bring in a healthy circulation of new ideas while they are at the forefront of delivering care to our patients.

Personal Well-Being

Being a doctor comes with many struggles and challenges. In anticipation of the future challenges you will face, I would like to encourage you to do your best to remain positive and retain your sense of purpose. That sense of purpose can be your beacon of light when you are at your lowest.

Your personal well-being will affect the people around you – your close ones and patients. Take some time away to rejuvenate yourself, if necessary, and confide in your families, friends and mentors because such support groups are a powerful source of encouragement.

On this note, it is encouraging to know that our public institutions are dedicated to look at improving the work environment and staff well-being.





MOH Outstanding PGY1 Award Recipients having a group photo with Professor Chee Yam Cheng, A/Prof Benjamin Ong and Professor London Lucien Ooi (Chairman TASC, MOH) [second from right]

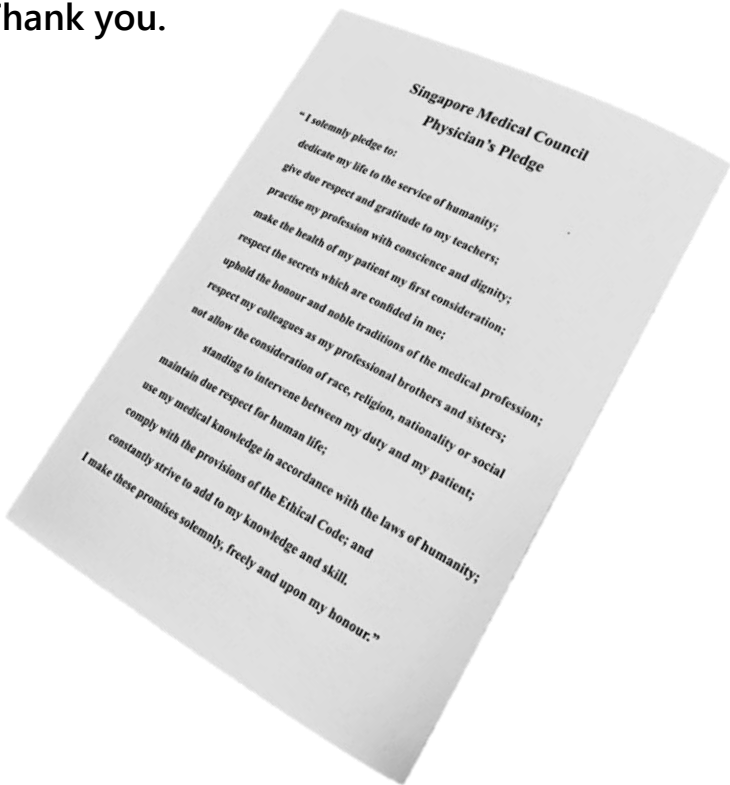
Conclusion

To conclude, this ceremony marks a milestone in your journey as a doctor.

Congratulations to all of you once again and I wish that you will honour your profession and remain steadfast in your dedication to your patients in this meaningful and life-long vocation.

I wish you every success.

Thank you.



MOH National Outstanding PGY1 Award

The National Outstanding PGY1 Award was presented during the SMC Pledge Ceremony on 28 September 2019.

This prestigious award recognises doctors who had demonstrated consistent outstanding performance throughout their PGY1 training in the areas of patient care and medical knowledge, and displayed desirable attributes of a doctor such as leadership, professionalism, communication skills, and team work.

The doctors who received the award this year had commenced their PGY1 training in 2017, and completed it in 2018.

In no specific order of merit, the recipients of the award are:

- Dr Tham Hui Yu
- Dr Gan Rui Xuan Tiffany
- Dr Fong Pei Yuan
- Dr Lim Ee Wen
- Dr Ho Hsien Hao Wilbert
- Dr Choo Qian Hui Jessica
- Dr Hwang Stephen
- Dr Toh Yi Huan Vera
- Dr Ng Qiyuan Aaron
- Dr Ang Ke Xin MagneLine

Featured Article

Getting to know our new President



Professor Chee Yam Cheng
President of the Singapore Medical Council

“

...to protect the health and safety of the public, the SMC needs to ensure high standards of ethical medical practice...by ensuring that doctors who enter, and remain in practice are well trained, and continue to maintain competence and display high ethical standards.

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Medicine is not a business. It is a vocation, a calling. Yes, it is true that business is a part of the medical practice, especially so in the private sector. The practice needs to be sustained in order to grow. Advancements in medical science should quickly lead to improvements in the delivery of healthcare services and hopefully, health of patients. These costs may be expensive to the individuals needing them. However, we are privileged to live in Singapore where the financing of healthcare services by the government makes it affordable to citizens.

2. What do you see as the role of the medical profession in the larger healthcare system?

The healthcare system does not consist of doctors in isolation. There are the hard working nurses who keep the wards running 24/7, as well as the pharmacists, and other allied health professionals. Without them, the system will fail. We are part of a team that delivers healthcare services and takes care of the health of patients. In the past, doctors were the ones who usually led the team. Now not necessarily so. Each has its own expertise to contribute to a patient's needs. Many a time, they can deliver the care better than the doctor can. We should acknowledge this and allow them to do so when appropriate.

In this issue, we speak with Professor Chee Yam Cheng who was elected the President of the Singapore Medical Council in August. Professor Chee is a specialist in Internal Medicine by training, a distinguished leader, doctor and teacher with more than 45 years of experience in public healthcare.

1. What does the profession of Medicine mean to you?

The medical profession is an honourable profession. We as doctors, are privileged to serve the community and participate in the journey of life with our patients. They have given us their full confidence and trust when they consult us. We should maintain high ethical standards of medical practice to ensure this trust remains the bond for efficient and effective care.

3. What are the key areas which you and the Council will be focusing on in your new term as President of SMC?

It is important to deal with the issues at hand first to ensure that medical practice is safe and of high ethical and medical standards. Doctors should be confident that when they do their best to serve their patients' needs, the decisions of the patients matter. To help patients decide their care management, doctors will need to communicate effectively with charts and drawings, if necessary so that patients truly understand the treatment proposed.



Consultation with patient

A review of the disciplinary process for doctors is well under way. The workgroup appointed by the Ministry of Health is expected to complete their work by the end of this year. After their recommendations come the implementation. More scheduled training sessions will take place regularly for the valued members of the Complaints Committees and the Disciplinary Tribunals, who include not only doctors, but also lawyers and lay persons. The medical community at large will understand better how the coming changes affect them. With greater clarity, they will then practise within the law to deliver good outcomes for patients. Overall the SMC needs to elevate the trust level the public has of the profession. The Medical Registration Act, under which the SMC is constituted as a statutory board, has defined the functions of the SMC. We need to ensure these functions are properly carried out.



Discussion with Mdm Kay Kuok (Chairman NHG)

4. How might SMC stay relevant in this time of evolving healthcare landscape?

The SMC will stay relevant to what is provided for in the MRA. In order to protect the health and safety of the public, the SMC needs to ensure high standards of ethical medical practice. It does so by ensuring that doctors who enter, and remain in practice are well trained, and continue to maintain competence and display high ethical standards. For those who fail to do so, there are due processes to deal with them. There are appeal processes provided for should the doctor or the patient feel that their concerns have not been adequately addressed.



Receiving a token from Minister for Health, Mr Gan Kim Yong

5. What advice would you give to doctors who wish to contribute to self-regulation of the medical profession in Singapore?

Self-regulation by the profession is a privilege. It has been afforded to doctors by the public. This privilege comes with a heavy responsibility which behoves active participation by doctors towards maintenance of self-regulation. Towards this end, more medical practitioners need to step forth and serve on the various committees of the SMC. Of late, much publicity has been on the disciplinary process. This disciplinary process kicks in when something has failed, or when some persons felt the need to lodge a complaint. We can all agree that it is better for all parties concerned that everything goes smoothly (which is the case most of the time). However, clinical outcomes for patients are neither fully nor always within the control of the doctor in charge. Risks are inherent in most – if not all – medical procedures. As such, untoward outcomes are unavoidable. Patients are advised of the risks and they need to accept these risks.



Serenading with TTS staff

6. Who or what inspired you to be a doctor?

My father. In my time, father knows best. My responsibility was to meet his expectation. One's hope was to do his or her best at A levels and score good results that the local medical school would accept for entry. It happened in my case.

It was not possible to go overseas to pursue medicine in the 1960s. Many in the last batch of Colombo Plan scholars for medicine were sent to Monash University in Victoria, Australia. For my year that I graduated from A levels, the nearest to reading medicine was a scholarship to do veterinary science in Canada.

7. What leisure activities do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I enjoy nature, things which man cannot make. I love spending time in the garden growing orchids and coaxing them to flower. I have an aviary with birds of the parrot family. They are colourful and have the potential to speak human languages including dialects. I do not have one that speaks but they are friendly enough. From young, I reared fish. It was guppies then, which breed easily. But now, it is koi fish for their colours and long life. Dogs are a man's best friend but as dwellings have become smaller, so have my dogs. Lastly, I golf.

8. Can you tell us something about yourself that not many people may know?

I think many people know many things about me already. They can google, and search me out on the web. But one thing probably not many people know is that I was enlisted into the Officer Cadet Course in the mid-1970s.

Best Cadet plaque
for the Combat
Medical and Medical
Ancillary Officers
Course (Intake XII)



I subsequently served as the SAFTI Medical Officer. From the above, I guess I can state an obvious fact. I am the oldest President of the SMC (bar one, Professor Raj Nambiar), who at almost 70 years, and a member of the Pioneer Generation, takes on the office. My hope is not to stay long. I am already looking for my successor. Will you volunteer?

Matters to Note

Newly elected Council members

The SMC held an election from 2 to 16 July 2019 to fill five (5) vacancies arising from the end of term of office for five Council members.

SMC welcomes the following five (5) newly elected members. Their term of office started from 11 October 2019, for a period of three years:

- (a) Dr Venkataraman Anantharaman;
- (b) Dr Leong Choon Kit;
- (c) Dr Lim Ah Leng;
- (d) Dr Ho Kok Sun; and
- (e) Dr Chuang Wei Ping.

Update your particulars and contact details with SMC

The SMC's primary mode of communication with doctors is through emails and website announcements.

All doctors are reminded to update their email addresses and contact details periodically in the SMC PRS to ensure that they receive timely alerts, notifications and information sent by the SMC.

To update your particulars and contact details, simply log in to PRS via the SMC's website (www.smc.gov.sg) using your SingPass User ID and Password.



Practising Certificates Renewal



PC Renewal Criteria

To renew his/her PC, the doctor must fulfil the following criteria:

- Obtained sufficient Continuing Medical Education (CME) points within the qualifying period; and
- Must not have any outstanding fine for not voting in previous SMC's Elections (only applicable for fully registered doctors).

How to Renew

SingPass and 2FA are required:

Doctors can log in to the Professional Registration System (PRS) in the SMC website with their SingPass and 2-Factor Authentication (2FA) to submit their application online. For more information about SingPass and 2FA, please visit the SingPass website.

Fully and conditionally registered doctors whose Practising Certificates (PCs) are expiring on 31 December 2019, have been informed to renew their application from **2 October 2019** onwards.

Example:

When a doctor's existing two-year PC is valid from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019, any CME points accrued for approved CME activities during the qualifying period between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2019 can be counted towards his/her PC renewal.

Where a doctor's one-year PC is valid from 1 January to 31 December 2019, any CME points accrued for approved CME activities during the qualifying period between 1 January and 31 December 2019 can be counted towards his PC renewal.

Late application fee charges

A late application fee of \$80 is chargeable in addition to the PC renewal fee for applications that are submitted in the month of December.

Under the Medical Registration Act, doctors are required to hold a valid PC before they can practise.

SMC Newsletter Editorial Committee

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Feedback

For feedback and comments, please contact us at enquiries@smc.gov.sg.