

Effective Medicine in Small Doses

1 Practice issues- The difficult patient with a hidden agenda and cautionary tale

- Dr Chia Tee Hian

35 yr lady consults for multiple unrelated complains of insomnia, eczema and backpain. Before she leaves she says, "By the way Doc, can you give me something to regulate my menses as it is delayed this month?"

She has history of tubal ligation 3 years ago and history of irregular menstrual cycle. She refuses a urine pregnancy test citing ligation. Moreover she has been separated from husband for 6 months and in midst of divorce proceedings. 10 days later, she returns with complains of lower abdominal cramps and bleeding per vagina. She agrees for a UPT and UPT is positive! She admits to being involved in a affair with another man. You suspect an ectopic pregnancy and refer her to A&E.

Tips:

1. History of tubal ligation does not exclude possibility of pregnancy in women of childbearing age presenting with amenorrhoea.
2. There is a significant risk of ectopic pregnancy in failed sterilization.
3. There was a hidden agenda to her consultation. The vehement response to the suggestion of pregnancy becomes understandable in light of later story of her affair.

3 Keeping good medical records - using rubber stamp as memory tool for maid statutory examinations

- Dr Henry Yeo

Doctors practice in good faith expecting maids to truth-tell and provide correct urine specimens. It is wise to keep good records in event they are called to defend their certification of maid statutory examinations. A rubber stamp with key information is helpful to prevent memory slip-ups. An example is illustrated below.

WP NO. _____	Contraception: No/Yes
Married/Single _____	regular / irregular
LMP _____	not palpable/palpable
Uterus _____	negative/positive
Urine _____	negative/positive
VDRL _____	negative/positive/NA
HIV _____	normal/abnormal/NA
CXR _____	
Clinic Nurse: _____	
Patient signature: _____	

Tips:

1. Useful information include Work Permit number, marital status and contraceptive use.
2. It helps to know which of your clinic staff attended to the maid and having patient sign works as a form of patient health declaration record.

2 Health supplements- Doctor, is omega-3 Fatty acid supplement good for my heart?

- Dr Seah Chiew Wan

Quick refresher: Omega-3 fatty acids are essential fatty acids. They cannot be manufactured by the body and obtained from food. There are 3 major types of omega 3 fatty acids: alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Omega-3 fatty acids decrease TG levels, decrease atherosclerotic plaque growth, decrease risk of arrhythmias and sudden death, decrease blood pressure (slight).

Tips:

American Heart Association recommends:

1. Healthy people without documented coronary heart disease (CHD)
 - eat a variety of fatty fish like salmon at least twice a week
 - eat tofu and other forms of soybeans, canola, walnut and flaxseed and their oils.
2. People with documented CHD and high triglycerides level
 - Take 1 to 4 grams of EPA + DHA supplements/ day.
 - Patients taking more than 3 grams of omega-3 fatty acids from supplements should do so only under physician's care as high dose can cause excessive bleeding in some people.

4 Home Care Supplies - Clueless over the cost of common home care supplies and rehabilitation equipments?

- Dr Ong Jin Ee

Having an idea of their cost helps you be aware of financial burden on caregivers and families caring for their handicapped loved ones.

Tips:

Adult Diapers	
(estimated cost per mth@ \$1 per pc & 5 pcs/dy)	\$150
Enteral Milk Supplements (cost per month)	
e.g. ENSURE® per can \$2 and 6 cans/dy	\$360
ENSURE® 1 kg tin powder \$22 and 2.5 days/tin	\$264
Quad stick	\$30
Walking Frame	\$75
Basic Wheelchair	\$300
Shower commode	\$200
Bedside commode	\$100
Basic three-crank Hospital Bed	\$1200

Most rehabilitation equipment vendors also stock second hand items at cheaper price so worth sourcing. A useful resource website is <http://www.caregivers.org.sg> which has a social service directory and equipment vendors listing.