

Editor's Words

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

During SARS outbreak in 2003, I was part of a small group of GPs that responded to MOH's call to help audit and guide the medical and nursing teams at intermediate and long term care (ILTC) facilities, consisting primarily of nursing homes. This issue of College Mirror consists of articles written in Aug 2020 bringing to us a kaleidoscopic view of our journey through this COVID-19 pandemic. This time round, we are thrilled to hear of many primary care physicians participating actively in this fight against COVID-19.

Dr Roy Ong, a GP volunteered pro-bono with the medical team of Crisis Relief Alliance, a community partner of MOM, listening to, assessing, advising, comforting and helping migrant workers and dormitory operators at Factory Converted Dormitories (FCD) and Government Quarantine Facilities (GQF). He shared that he responded to this front-line work to help the migrant workers because of his sense of duty. We hear echoes of this professionalism in our healthcare workers as we walk through the hallway of personal courage, sacrifices and collective victory during this national crisis.

Dr Gregory Ko shared some of the challenges faced by a single doctor GP practice during this pandemic. On top of caring for his patients while trying to keep himself safe, he tries his best to protect his clinic staff who are older than him. For example, he took it upon himself to mop and disinfect the clinic in full PPE at the end of each day. We are very encouraged to hear of doctors at the frontline exhibiting caring leadership for their teams while serving faithfully.

Dr Aziz, a GP who volunteered at Singapore EXPO shared with us how he spent extra time to reassure a migrant worker who was terrified and afraid that he might die from COVID. We are proud to hear that doctors like Dr Aziz kept the human touch of a caring primary care physician while attending to the migrant workers during this pandemic.

A/P Tan Boon Yeow, a senior consultant and CEO of St. Luke's Hospital shared that despite the challenges of coping with COVID-19, initiatives flourished in this charitable organization as staff and volunteers supported their patients and one another through daily morning broadcasts of words of encouragement, virtual volunteering such as Guitar Connection, video consultations, medications delivery, and Project Warm Hearts. Please support their continuing good work in their inaugural virtual charity concert, Voices of Light on 6 Nov 2020.

Dr Ng Liling, a family physician working at a community hospital wrote on the importance of finding a balance between implementing new safety measures at the hospital to protect the patients during this pandemic and the need of family members and love ones to connect and support one another while one of them is sick and hospitalized. She believes that adaptability to new challenges, and having the hope that we shall overcome, will carry us through this war against COVID-19.

Dr Teo Boon See and other GPs contributed ideas to ATC and Temasek Foundation to improve on the design of COSMO (COVID-19 Swabbing Mobile Booth) which can be pushed out of the clinic to be used during clinic operating hours and pushed back and kept in the clinic at the end of the day, improving safety for our doctors and patients.

On the education front, Dr Charity Low shared with us how her team of adjunct Family Practice tutors at NUS innovated and enabled medical students to continue with clinical learning through Zoom.

Dr Lois Hong is a Family Physician at a polyclinic currently preparing to go to Timor-Leste to serve cross-culturally. She shared with us some tips on cultural competency in a medical consultation, illustrating some points from a short conversation with a migrant worker who was recovering from COVID-19. She reminds us that our culture shapes our ideas, concerns, and expectations as well as knowledge, interpretation of events, attitudes, and behaviors. In order for us to be better clinicians in taking care of the migrant workers' population in Singapore, we need to learn how to patiently listen to and engage with them, making an effort to understand their daily work, families, dreams and aspirations.

The cornerstone for the success of Singapore's healthcare response to the COVID-19 pandemic is built upon the countless sacrifices made quietly by our healthcare workers in the frontline, in particular our GPs and Family Physicians, who assumed much additional administrative and clinical work and responsibilities willingly and courageously. Press on brothers and sisters in this good fight and may we be at our best at this critical moment in our national history. One day we shall share with those who come after us how we stood and prevailed as a nation, as a people, as the healthcare fraternity in this war that crept to our doorstep!

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