

### Event Highlights

Summary of Questions and Answers  
at the Medical Ethics Seminars

### Professional Matters

Professional  
Registration System  
(PRS) Access for  
SingPass Users

## Opening Message



Welcome to this 7th edition of the **SMC News**.

In this edition, we focus on the recently released 2016 Editions of the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines and the Handbook on Medical Ethics, as well as the Medical Ethics Seminars, which were held from September to October, to explain to doctors about the updates and revisions and to address their queries and concerns.

SMC News will also share with you the Speeches delivered at the Singapore Medical Council Physician's Pledge Ceremony held on 19 November 2016 at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. There were 390 doctors who took the Pledge in this Ceremony.

From 15 January 2017, doctors can only access the SMC Professional Registration System using the SingPass two-step authentication process called SingPass 2FA. Please sign up for an account if you do not have one.

I hope you will enjoy reading this edition of SMC News.

**Professor Tan Ser Kiat**

President, Singapore Medical Council

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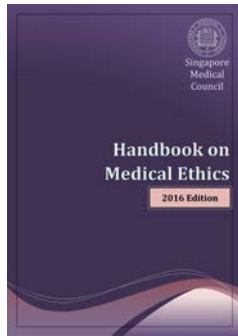
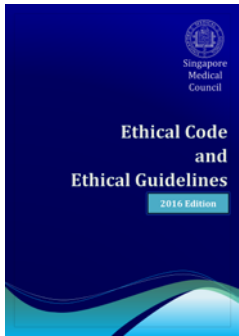
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#### Disclaimer

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# 2016 EDITIONS OF THE SMC ETHICAL CODE AND ETHICAL GUIDELINES AND HANDBOOK ON MEDICAL ETHICS

Event  
Highlights



The Singapore Medical Council (SMC) has updated the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (ECEG), which was last revised in 2002. Published alongside the 2016 edition of the ECEG (2016 ECEG) is the Handbook on Medical Ethics (HME), an educational resource which provides explanations on the applications of the principles laid out in the ECEG and advice on best practices. The 2016 ECEG, published on 13 September 2016, will come into force on 1 January 2017 (as per SMC Advisory 13 December 2016, Guideline H3(7) of the 2016 ECEG specifically comes into force on 1 July 2017).



Dr Tan Chi Chiu as speaker

## The Review

Since the last revision of the ECEG in 2002, medical practice has evolved with rapid advancements in healthcare, changing population needs and expectations, a better informed generation of patients and changing business models. The SMC saw the need to update the ECEG so as to guide doctors to be cognisant of their ethical obligations to patients in modern medical practice.

The task of reviewing the ECEG was undertaken by a nine-member Working Committee appointed by the SMC in late 2010 and spanned a period of six years. The review process included detailed research into the medical guidelines of various overseas medical bodies, references to existing legislation in Singapore, focus group discussions and consultations with the medical fraternity.

The 2016 ECEG represents the consensus of the profession as a whole and the Council is grateful for all the feedback received from medical community.

## Members of the Working Committee

The Working Committee comprised eight doctors and an ethicist. They are:

- (a) **Dr Tan Chi Chiu**  
SMC Council member. Chairman of the Working Committee and the SMC Ethics Committee.
- (b) **Professor Alastair Campbell**  
Director Emeritus at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics of the Yong Loo Yin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore. Former Professor, Ethics in Medicine in the Medical School of the University of Bristol and Director of its Centre for Ethics in Medicine.
- (c) **Professor Lee Eng Hin**  
Former SMC Council member. Member of SMC Ethics Committee, National Bioethics Advisory Committee and Senior Advisor at the Division of Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore.
- (d) **Professor Tan Tiang Lee Walter**  
Former SMC Council member and President of the Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons. Member of the Ethics Committee at the Raffles Hospital.
- (e) **Associate Professor Chin Jing Jih**  
SMC Council member. Adjunct Associate Professor at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics of the Yong Loo Yin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore.
- (f) **Associate Professor Roy Joseph**  
Chairman of both the National Medical Ethics Committee and Clinical Bioethics Committee, National University Hospital.
- (g) **Assistant Professor Raymond Chua**  
SMC Council member. Group Director of Health Products Regulation Group at the Health Sciences Authority.
- (h) **Adjunct Professor Chew Chin Hin**  
Honorary Advisor to the Division of the Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore. Former Chairman, National Medical Ethics Committee and Deputy Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health.
- (i) **Dr Loh Wee Tiong Alfred**  
Former Chief Executive Officer at the World Organisation of Family Doctors. Founding Partner of Raffles Medical Group.



The Council would like to thank the Working Committee for their six years of dedication and hard work in reviewing and crafting the 2016 ECEG and HME. The Working Committee undertook the process of studying in detail each and every piece of feedback and input that was received over the years. The Working Committee met and deliberated on the ECEG over more than 30 meetings, which excludes the number of times the working drafts were tabled for many rounds of discussions at Council meetings before Council approved the final version of the 2016 ECEG and HME.



Prof Lee Eng Hin as speaker

## Medical Ethics Seminars

In conjunction with the publication of the 2016 ECEG and HME, the SMC organised four sessions of Medical Ethics Seminars on 29 September, 1 October, 5 October and 20 October 2016 to cater to all sectors of the medical profession.

A total of more than 530 doctors and healthcare administrators attended the Medical Ethics Seminars. At each seminar, members of the Working Committee shared the process of reviewing the ECEG and the principles and key considerations they had in drafting the 2016 ECEG. The Working Committee also dived into various sections of the 2016 ECEG during each Question and Answer (Q&A) session when the attendees were invited to seek clarifications on any parts of the ECEG, or had ethical dilemmas to share and discuss in the light of the 2016 ECEG.

Many questions were raised and issues discussed at these seminars. The list of issues discussed (from the 2016 ECEG) is summarised below:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>(a)</b> A1 - Duty of care                                 | <b>(k)</b> C7 - Medical confidentiality                       |
| <b>(b)</b> A5 - Working in teams                             | <b>(l)</b> C8 - Caring for minors (persons below age 21)      |
| <b>(c)</b> A6 - Telemedicine                                 | <b>(m)</b> C10 - Visual or audio recordings of patients       |
| <b>(d)</b> A7 - End-of-life care                             | <b>(n)</b> C14 - Termination of a patient-doctor relationship |
| <b>(e)</b> B3 - Medical records                              | <b>(o)</b> D - Relationship with colleagues                   |
| <b>(f)</b> B4 - Medical certificates                         | <b>(p)</b> G - Advertising                                    |
| <b>(g)</b> B8 - Medical research / sponsorships for research | <b>(q)</b> I2 - Relationships with non-medical companies      |
| <b>(h)</b> B9 - Complementary and alternative medicine       | <b>(r)</b> Others   |
| <b>(i)</b> C3 - Personal beliefs / spiritual counselling     |   |
| <b>(j)</b> C6 - Consent                                      |   |



A/Prof Roy Joseph briefing the attendees

For sharing and educational purposes, more details on the issues raised and discussed at the Q&A sessions can be found in the [“Summary of Q&As at the Medical Ethics Seminars”](#) published on SMC’s website. SMC has also issued an advisory to all doctors with regard to the payment of fees to managed care companies, third party administrators, insurance entities or patient referral services. The [advisory](#) is also available on SMC’s website.

# Opening Speech by Professor Tan Ser Kiat, President, Singapore Medical Council, at the Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony on Saturday, 19 November 2016, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore

Fellow Council Members,  
Colleagues and Friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of SMC, let me welcome all of you to this afternoon's Pledge Ceremony, especially to those of you taking it for the first time after your graduation.

## Significance of the Physician's Pledge

The Pledge you are about to take represents one of the most important events in your professional career. Few other professions are held in such high regard as the medical profession, where the health and well-being of your patients and their families are dependent on your knowledge, skills, and the decisions you make. The Physician's Pledge is an important milestone in the life of a doctor in Singapore - where you promise to uphold and honour the values and ethics of our profession before you embark on your careers. I hope you will at all times continue to honour and fulfil these obligations throughout your life, both within and outside of your professional careers.

There will be many challenges that you may face in your medical career and it is the Council's hope that you will always remember and return to this special moment in time - when you first took the Physician's Pledge in the presence of your seniors and peers - to abide by the duty of care to your patients and the medical profession, above all else.

## Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines

As members of the medical profession, it is important for you to know and understand the principles and parameters of the recently published 2016 edition of the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (ECEG), which will come into force on 1 January next year. The ECEG impacts on your practice, as a doctor, and the medical services you offer to your patients. The new SMC Handbook on Medical Ethics, which is an educational resource, helps to explain and clarify the application of the 2016 ECEG and provides advice and guidance on best practices.

This afternoon, I would like to address some key issues with regard to your practice as a doctor.

Firstly, the patient-doctor relationship has changed over the years - patients are more educated, better informed and have higher expectations of their doctors. They want to be active participants and be involved in their own care. The preservation of good patient-doctor relationships also hinges on a mutual understanding of each other's rights and obligations.

On your part, you need to constantly go back to the basics and assimilate the fundamental tenets of medical ethics in managing patients. There is also a



Welcome Address by SMC President Professor Tan Ser Kiat

need to establish an excellent patient-doctor relationship based on mutual trust and respect and resist viewing such relationships as transactional. You would also need to at all times, improve communications and interactions with your patients and support them in their quest for excellent care and outcomes.

The widespread use of the internet and social media has seen a rise in problems caused by miscommunication. Many complaints lodged against doctors recently can be traced to problems of communication (or a lack thereof). Most patients have ready access to information about their medical condition and treatments through the Internet. They may or may not be able to interpret this information correctly and objectively. We encourage our doctors to continually improve their soft skills by listening carefully to their patients, understanding their needs, and establishing a trusting relationship.

Secondly, it is important for you and your colleagues (which includes other healthcare professionals) to work as a team. Today's medical practice is much more complex and cannot be delivered by a single person holistically. Each member plays an important role in the overall care. As such, you must constantly communicate and collaborate with the other team members and do what you can to improve the outcome. Like they say - the whole is bigger than the sum of the parts.

Thirdly, you are obliged to respect medical confidentiality and not disclose information obtained in confidence or in the course of attending to your patients without their consent, except in some special situations. You have to refrain from accessing confidential patient information, if you are not involved in any aspect of a patient's care, and you are obliged not to allow patients' confidential information to be disseminated knowingly or unknowingly through carelessness or through your participation in social or other media. In a team setting, you may disclose information to other healthcare team members or other doctors who are directly involved in the patient's care.

As medical practice evolves and the nature of the relationships between patients and doctors develops, you should embrace these new guidelines which will help you to navigate the complexity of the environment we practise in. This is to ensure that patients' interests are well-protected and consequently, patients will also appreciate that you have their best interests at heart. The application of the ECEG will vary according to individual circumstances but the basic fundamental principles remain and should not be compromised. The 2016 ECEG and Handbook on Medical Ethics, if properly understood and applied, serve to strengthen the patient-doctor relationship, improve communication, align expectations and ultimately, enhance the practice of medicine.

The medical profession is a noble one that society respects, trusts and has confidence in. You will do well to remember this, especially in times of doubt when making decisions. You have the ethical obligation and responsibility of ensuring that the interest and wellbeing of your patients come first and are paramount. Societal and public expectations of doctors are indeed high and this is evidenced by the comments of the Court of 3 Judges in a recent case. I quote:

**"Indeed, the proposition that the spirit of public service and the existence of ethical obligations underpin all professional practice applies with equal (and, arguably, even greater) force to medical practitioners, whom we collectively entrust with our health, our well-being and, in certain instances, our lives. In this respect, the medical profession occupies a unique societal position of both great privilege and commensurate responsibility"**

I hope you will continue to uphold and honour the confidence and trust that society places on you.

## Conclusion

As you move forward in your career, the Council and I hope that you will find your practice throughout your professional life a most fulfilling one, one that you can look back on with great joy and satisfaction. It is our hope that you will put your patient's best interests and welfare before your own at all times.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a quote from Dr Edward Trudeau, a 19th Century American physician:

**"To cure sometimes,  
To relieve often,  
To comfort always."**

This still holds true and relevant even in today's highly technologically and scientifically based medicine.

Thank you.

# Speech by Guest-of-Honour, Professor James Best, Dean, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Nanyang Technological University, at the Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony on Saturday, 19 November 2016, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore

President of the Singapore Medical Council, Professor Tan Ser Kiat,  
Council members,  
Medical colleagues,  
Guests,

Good afternoon everyone.

I am deeply honoured to have been invited to address you on this special occasion.

First of all, my warmest congratulations to you as new members of our profession and to your supporters here today. You have reached another milestone in your medical careers and a very important one that reminds you - in this ceremony - of your responsibilities as doctors - or physicians.

As the famous Canadian physician William Osler said: 'The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head'.

As the President has just said, we live in an age that has seen great technical advances and we are on the threshold of an era of individualised or personalised medicine, based on huge amounts of data and complex analyses. It is critical that we preserve the humanity in medicine and exercise our hearts in our interactions with our patients.

This is what you will be promising to do in a few moments when you recite the Physician's Pledge, the World Medical Association's modern version of the Hippocratic Oath, which takes us back to the roots of Western medicine, well over 2000 years ago. You will undertake to 'uphold the honour and noble traditions of the medical profession'.

It is our personal and collective values, based on these noble traditions, that make medicine such a special career and make us worthy of the trust people place in us. We have the wonderful privilege of sharing the lives of our patients at joyous and sad occasions throughout their life journeys.

Seeing all of you here today at the start of your career takes me back to when I was at the same stage in my medical career, and brings to mind some of the names and faces of my patients from over 40 years ago. Not only can I remember their names

and faces, I can remember which beds they were in, in which part of the hospital when I treated them as patients. One was my first doctor patient. John was a family physician or GP from a small country town a few hours north of Melbourne. I was a first year doctor and John had multiple myeloma, which is still a very nasty disease today. I was quite nervous about treating a senior and respected doctor, and he was marvellous in reassuring and supporting me as his doctor.

What helps us to fulfil our responsibilities, and what inspires us to practise medicine at the highest standard we can, is the support of our colleagues, even when they are our patients. This collegiality in medicine is a very rewarding aspect of our profession, and the Pledge you are about to take not only brings you more firmly into the medical profession in Singapore, but into the fellowship of medicine worldwide.

Another patient I recall well was a young woman with acute leukaemia. Mary was married with two young children and was in her mid-twenties, the same age as I was. I spent many hours caring for her while knowing that the most she could hope for was a few extra months of life. It was heartbreaking to see her dying of what was an incurable condition in those days and I still think of her quite often. This memory reminds me of how much we can be inspired by our patients, and how much we can learn from them. Medicine as a profession demands much from us but it also gives us much in life experience.

The Czech writer Franz Kafka in his short story 'A Country Doctor', says: 'To write prescriptions is easy; to come to an understanding with people is hard'. The hard part is something we need to work on over our entire careers in medicine. Because the essence of good medicine is meaningful human interactions and the greatest rewards in medicine come from that source.

Today, in the presence of your families, friends, your contemporary and senior colleagues, you are promising that you will meet the weighty responsibilities of our profession.



Guest of Honour Professor James Best, Dean, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, NTU, addressing the doctors

You are also acknowledging that you will respect your colleagues as your professional brothers and sisters. You should never feel alone in medicine and you should never hesitate to seek the advice and assistance of your colleagues, both in the care of your patients and in your personal life. And you should never hesitate to offer that assistance if asked or even if you are not asked, but you can see it is needed.

As the Dean of Singapore's newest medical school, could I also place emphasis on one more section of the Physician's Pledge? It is the line: 'give due respect and gratitude to my teachers'. And do you know how you can best show that respect and gratitude? By willingly passing on the knowledge and skills you have acquired; by becoming a teacher yourself. After all, the Greek origin of the word 'doctor' comes from the word for 'teacher'.

I want to conclude with my favourite quotation from the American poet, Robert Frost, that I think epitomises what you are pledging to do in your medical lives. It is from his poem, Stopping by woods on a snowy evening, and it ends:

**The woods are lovely, dark and deep  
But I have promises to keep  
And miles to go before I sleep  
And miles to go before I sleep**

I am sure that you all will uphold the noblest traditions of the medical profession in Singapore and beyond. I congratulate you and I wish you all wonderful careers in Medicine.

Thank you.

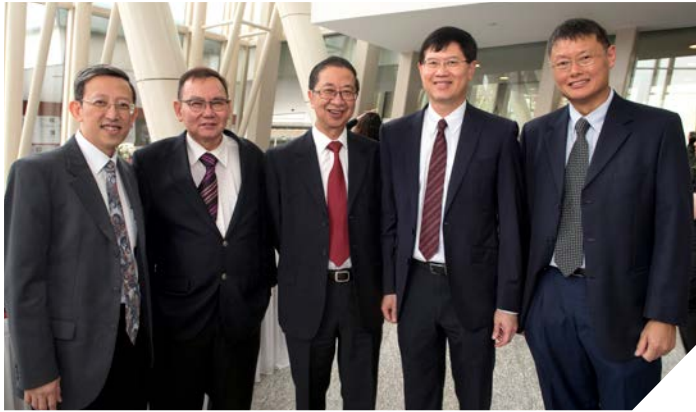


## SMC Pledge Affirmation Ceremony

SMC held the second Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony for the year at the National University of Singapore Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music on 19 November 2016. Taking the Pledge is an important milestone in the careers of doctors at the threshold of obtaining full registration status. It is the starting point where our young doctors promise to uphold the values of our highly respected and trusted profession. A total of 390 doctors took the Physician's Pledge witnessed by family and friends.



Dr Ng Yao Yi Kennedy leading the SMC Physician's Pledge with SMC Council members



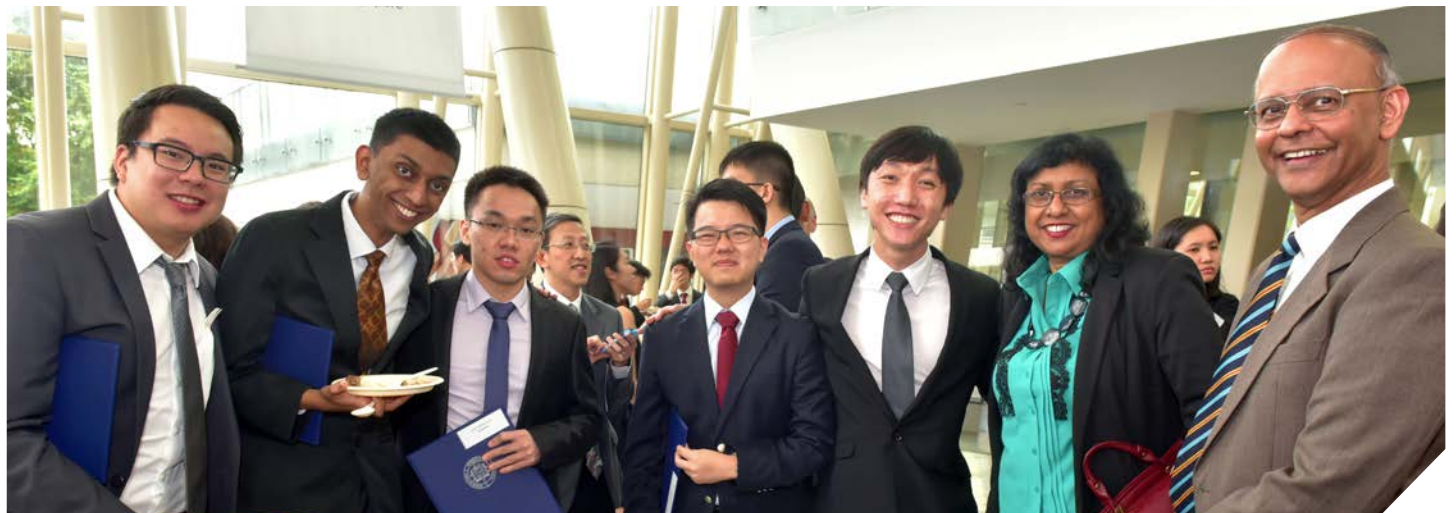
Professor Tan Ser Kiat, President (SMC) A/Prof Benjamin Ong, Registrar (SMC) and Council members at the post-ceremony reception



Professor Tan Ser Kiat, President (SMC), with Pledge attendees at the post-ceremony reception



Pledge attendees at the post-ceremony reception with Council member Dr Thirumorthy



Pledge attendees and invited guests at the post-ceremony reception

## Things to Note

# Professional Registration System (PRS) Access for SingPass Users

With effect from Sunday, 15 January 2017, you can ONLY access the Singapore Medical Council Professional Registration System (PRS) using the **SingPass 2-Step Verification (2FA)**.

To sign up for SingPass 2FA, please visit the [SingPass website](#).

With this change-over, please note that you can no longer use your Medical Council Registration (MCR) Number or Temporary Registration Number to access the PRS.

## SMC Election 2017

The SMC is scheduling an election in April 2017 to vote for new Council Members following the end of term of office for seven elected Council members in June 2017.

It is compulsory for all Fully Registered doctors holding a valid Practising Certificate to vote in the election of new Council Members.

This election will be called if there are more candidates nominated for the positions than vacancies available.

The Nomination period will be announced to all Fully Registered doctors via email.

Election details will be provided in due course via emails and website announcements.



## 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 Professional

Registration System to ensure that they receive alerts, notifications and information materials sent out by SMC.

To update your particulars and contact details, simply log into the SMC's website ([www.smc.gov.sg](http://www.smc.gov.sg)) using your SingPass User ID and Password.

### Feedback

If you have any feedback or comments on any articles in this newsletter, please contact us at [smc\\_newsletter@smc.gov.sg](mailto:smc_newsletter@smc.gov.sg)

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