

# SMC



Singapore Medical Council

# NEWS

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## Profile

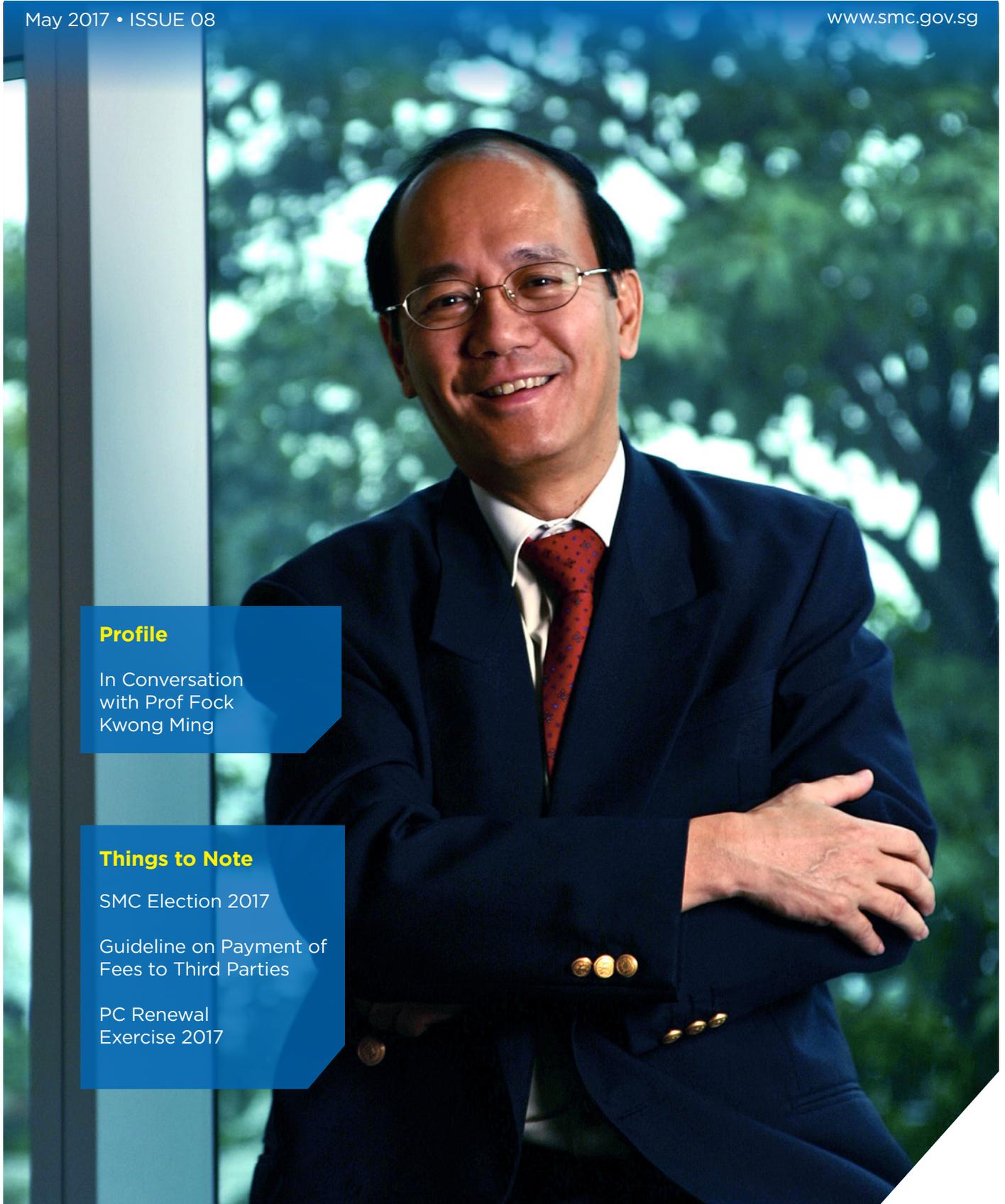
In Conversation  
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SMC Election 2017

Guideline on Payment of  
Fees to Third Parties

PC Renewal  
Exercise 2017



## Message from President

Welcome to our 8th edition of the **SMC News**.

We would like to thank all doctors who participated in the recent SMC Election 2017. Altogether, 11 candidates stood for the election. We are pleased to announce that the seven candidates with the highest number of votes have been elected. The newly elected members will serve for a three-year term in the Council.

Come 1 July 2017, guideline H3(7) of the 2016 SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines on the payment of fees to third parties will come into force. We wish to remind our doctors that in managing our patients, we must always place patients' best interests above personal interests and any business or financial considerations.

For doctors whose practising certificates (PCs) are due for renewal by the end of this year, please note that the PC renewal exercise will start on 2 September 2017. You can find out the criteria and qualifying periods of the CME points for PC renewal in this edition of the SMC News.

We have 305 doctors who promised to uphold the values of our respected and trusted profession during the Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony held early this year. Our Guest-of-Honour at the event, Professor Thomas M Coffman, Dean, Duke-NUS Medical School, has advised our doctors that beyond the passion to cure, doctors must maintain a flexibility to adapt their practices to meet the developing needs of the nation.

Last but not least, in this edition, we are pleased to feature our Council member and Gastroenterologist Prof Fock Kwong Ming - who shares with us the pioneers who had inspired him most in his career and life.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of the SMC News.

**Professor Tan Ser Kiat**  
President, Singapore Medical Council

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### Feedback

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## SMC Election 2017

The Singapore Medical Council (SMC) held an election from 25 April to 9 May 2017 to fill seven positions in the Medical Council.

The newly elected members are:

- 1) Dr Chen Suet Ching Jeanette
- 2) Dr Chua Swee Boon Raymond
- 3) Dr Ganesh Ramalingam
- 4) Dr Hee Hwan Ing
- 5) Dr Lim Khong Jin Michael
- 6) Dr Ng Wei Keong Alan
- 7) Dr Tay Miah Hiang

Elected members will serve for a term of three years with effect from 9 June 2017.

## Guideline on Payment of Fees to Third Parties comes into force on 1 July 2017

While the 2016 version of the Singapore Medical Council Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (2016 ECEG) has come into force on 1 January 2017, Guideline H3(7) will specifically come into force on **1 July 2017**. This guideline pertains to payment of fees by doctors to managed care companies, third party administrators, insurance entities or patient referral services.

To clarify and address concerns raised by doctors, the SMC has issued an [advisory](#) dated 13 December 2016 to all registered medical practitioners. For ease of reference, both the [2016 ECEG](#) and the advisory can be found on the SMC website.

## Practising Certificate Renewal Exercise 2017

Fully and conditionally registered doctors whose Practising Certificates (PCs) are expiring on 31 December 2017, can renew their application from **2 September 2017** onwards.

### Criteria for Renewal

To renew your PC, a doctor must fulfil the following criteria:

- Have obtained sufficient Continuing Medical Education (CME) points within the Qualifying Period; and
- Must not have any outstanding fine for not voting in previous SMC Elections (applies only to fully registered doctors).

### How to Renew - SingPass and 2-FA are required

Doctors can log into the [Professional Registration System](#) (PRS) of 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](#).

### PC Validity and Qualifying Periods

Where a doctor's two-year PC is valid from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017, any CME points accrued for approved CME activities during the qualifying period between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017 can be counted towards his PC renewal.

Where a doctor's one-year PC is valid from 1 January to 31 December 2017, any CME points accrued for approved CME activities during the qualifying period between 1 January and 31 December 2017 can be counted towards his PC renewal.

### Cessation of Hardcopy Renewal Notices

Since 1 January 2016, the Singapore Medical Council has stopped sending hardcopy notices to doctors. Instead, doctors will be notified via email when their PCs are due for renewal. As such, doctors are strongly urged to update their email addresses in the PRS in order to receive updates and notifications from SMC.

# Welcome Address by Prof Tan Ser Kiat, SMC President

SMC  
Physician's  
Pledge  
Affirmation  
Ceremony



SMC held the first Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony for the year at the National University of Singapore Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music on 25 February 2017. Taking the Pledge is an important milestone in the careers of young doctors whereby they pledge to uphold the values of our highly respected and trusted profession. A total of 305 doctors took the Physician's Pledge witnessed by family and friends.

Professor Thomas Coffman,  
Fellow Council Members,  
Colleagues and Friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here today to witness and join you in affirming the Singapore Medical Council Physician's Pledge. This Pledge taking marks a significant milestone in your career in Singapore.

The practice of medicine has always been a noble calling. Doctors treat the sick and are entrusted to heal them to the best of their ability. Bound by a code of conduct to place patients before self, they have earned the respect, trust and confidence of society. In Singapore, this professional responsibility embodies the noblest values of our medical profession.

## Purpose and Spirit of the SMC Physician's Pledge

The current SMC Physician's Pledge is based on the original Hippocratic Oath and the 1984 Declaration of Geneva, which was adopted by the World Medical Association. Widely known as the "Father of Medicine", Hippocrates was an outstanding Greek physician who was said to have lived a professional life of outstanding moral and ethical values. This oath represents the ideals of the selfless dedication to the welfare of patients, the preservation of human life, and a guiding code of conduct for physicians of the highest order.

The SMC Physician's Pledge has been taken by succeeding generations of doctors before you, and promises to uphold the specific values, ethical standards and honourable conduct in their service to patients, and not be swayed by other interests. It is steeped

in tradition and represents the very essence of the medical profession.

By taking this Pledge today, it signifies your commitment to the values of the medical profession. It is my hope that you will take this Physician's Pledge seriously, with pride and honour, upholding the values and principles it advocates, such as service to humanity, respect for your teachers and professional colleagues, putting patients first, and adherence to the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (or ECEG). This Pledge will serve as your guide especially in times of professional, moral and ethical dilemmas throughout your professional career.

SMC has recently released the 2016 edition of the ECEG. The accompanying Handbook on Medical Ethics serves as an invaluable educational resource. If properly understood and carefully applied, both the 2016 ECEG and Handbook will help to guide you in your practice and improve your communication skills, strengthen your relationships with patients, and ultimately, enhance the quality of practice as a whole.

## Higher Patient Expectations

Over the years, with advances in technology and rapid changes in the practice landscape, the well-accepted trust and standing of medical doctors have been challenged and stretched.



Dr Koh Zhi Sheng Darren leading the SMC Physician's Pledge with SMC Council members



The commercialisation of medicine, rise of telemedicine and the rise of social media have contributed to a shift in perception. Together with the growth of the Internet, patients have easy access to information and have become much more knowledgeable about their own medical conditions – the possible treatments and outcomes – and of their rights and choices of treatment.

### Attitude towards Patients

This afternoon, I would like to draw your attention to a revised section of the 2016 ECEG, which has been updated substantially, to highlight the importance of interaction with patients and what you need to consider in establishing and maintaining good professional relationships with them.

This relates to the attitude in which you approach your patients which determines the quality of the professional patient-doctor relationship.

You should first and foremost always uphold your patients' right to privacy and dignity and treat them with

courtesy, consideration, compassion and respect. In turn, patients who trust you and are comfortable with you, are more likely to benefit from your advice and management. On the other hand, you are also not obliged to be subjected to abuse of any kind by patients, their family members or other accompanying persons.

### Good and Effective Communication

A significant number of complaints against doctors by patients and their families today are due entirely to poor or lack of communication.

Studies have shown that besides good medical skills and knowledge, good communication skill is essential to establish good patient-doctor relationships.

While doctors have their own communication styles, for the purpose of safety and good clinical outcomes, you can adopt a set of good interpersonal and communication skills to establish trust and understanding with your patients. For example, it is important

for you to communicate clearly with your patients and provide sufficient information to enable them to understand the nature or significance of their condition. In this way, they will be able to make informed decisions for themselves, such as agreeing to a proposed form of treatment.

Showing them that we have time for them, listening very attentively, asking questions, explaining information clearly, clarifying doubts patiently, and updating patients on their test results and clinical progress are also other basic and essential methods of good and effective communication.

### Conclusion

As you take these solemn words of the Pledge today, you must remember to honour and live by its principles and let them guide you through your entire career. Your other task is to ensure that these values are passed on to your students and young doctors in the course of your medical practice and career.

On this note may I wish all of you a most fulfilling career, one which you can look back later with great satisfaction and remember the many achievements that you have accomplished in your practice.

Thank you.

# Address by Guest-of-Honour Prof Thomas M Coffman, Dean, Duke-NUS Medical School

Professor Tan Ser Kiat, President, Singapore Medical Council, Associate Professor Benjamin Ong, Registrar, Singapore Medical Council, Council members, Medical colleagues, Guests,

I feel very privileged to be your Guest-of-Honour today at this very special ceremony. I am happy to be here with you to mark and celebrate this significant milestone in your medical careers. Congratulations to all. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend to you this very warm welcome into the medical fraternity, a profession and vocation that is challenging but fulfilling and emotionally enriching like no other. As doctors, we are truly fortunate to pursue our life's work in the service of our patients.

As you heard, as part of the activities today, you will take the Singapore Medical Council Physician's Pledge. Now I must admit, before I began preparing for my remarks today, I was not really familiar with the Pledge. But as Prof Tan said, it clearly harkens back to the Hippocratic Oath, which we recite with our new medical students every year, and many of you may have done that. I find that the SMC Pledge actually really connects with the tenets of modern

medicine in a much more direct way. I feel certain it will resonate with you, and it really provides a very clear roadmap for young doctors to serve your patients, to honour your teachers and your profession, and to maintain the highest standards of ethics and professionalism.

You stand on the threshold of a very exciting time with much to look forward to. Ahead of you are countless opportunities to help your patients, by diagnosing and curing diseases, or by providing comfort and consolation when their diseases cannot be cured. And, although medical school and the beginning of your training is behind you, you must remain perpetual students of medicine, finding ways to continually improve your skills and practice. And some of you may have an opportunity to impact medicine in other ways, through teaching or research, or some of you will rise up as clinical leaders. Whatever your path, I hope you continue to enjoy the journey and find fulfilment in all that you do.

So on occasions like this, speakers are wont to quote famous people from the past. For doctors, Sir William Osler is a favourite; he's certainly a favourite of mine. And there are reasons for that. As one of the



founders of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Osler revolutionised medicine by taking medical education out of the lecture hall and to the bedside, while also creating the first residency programme for specialty training of physicians. Osler practiced medicine with great skill and humour. I will cite one of his quotes here that seems apt for today's ceremony:

"The young physician starts life with 20 drugs for each disease and the old physician ends life with one drug for 20 diseases."

I suppose I like this one because I'm an old physician. But from my perspective, I believe Osler is conveying the importance of experience in honing and perfecting





your medical skills, and how experience can sharpen your clinical acumen and enhance the precision of your diagnoses and prescribed treatments. So I urge you to take this to heart, valuing and learning from each of your patients, who will always be your most powerful teachers.

I think of those times, back in the day, when I was in your position as a young doctor, I remember it as exhilarating and inspiring...of course, the stress and sleep deprivation have long faded. But the vivid experiences, the life-long bonds you will form with your fellow doctors, and the spirit of shared trials and accomplishments is an unforgettable and essential part of becoming a good clinician. I urge you to revel in and maximise these experiences and opportunities.

In this regard, the healthcare needs and requirements of society are constantly evolving, and we are certainly seeing this today across the medical landscape in Singapore. In the face of an aging population and an increase of chronic diseases, healthcare must evolve to meet the needs of our changing population over the coming years. The recent restructuring of Singapore's healthcare clusters is an indicator of how patterns of care will change in the future. Thus, beyond the passion to cure, doctors in your generation must maintain a flexibility to adapt your practices to meet the developing needs of the nation. You will be called upon for innovative solutions, and to push the boundaries of clinical practice to solve the complex healthcare needs

in Singapore's future. I feel certain that you are up to this task.

In closing, I wish you all the best in this next, very exciting phase of your medical careers, as you serve Singapore with a pinch of innovation, a dash of compassion and a large dose of integrity. I will leave you with one final quote from the great Sir William Osler, "The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease." I urge you always to aspire to be that great physician.

Thank you.

# In Conversation with Prof Fock Kwong Ming

Profile



SMC News spoke to SMC Council member and Gastroenterologist, Prof Fock Kwong Ming, on managing patients' expectations in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. Prof Fock also shared about the pioneers who had inspired him in his career and life.

## What brought you into the field of medicine?

When I was at 'A' levels I wanted a career in Law. I have two uncles who were doctors and they persuaded me that a practice in Medicine is more rewarding, a more satisfying career.

## If you were to give one single piece of advice to young doctors what would that be?

If I were to give a single piece of advice to young doctors, the advice would be: 'always remember that it is a privilege to serve the patient in health, disease or end of life. Do not abuse this privilege that society has given you'.

## How can doctors deal with the rising patient expectations and rapidly evolving healthcare landscape?

There is no doubt that patient expectations have been rising rapidly in the last 2 or 3 decades with information being more readily available online. To deal with this, it is imperative that a medical practitioner keeps up to date with advances in medicine. This can be through CME activities, conferences and interaction with colleagues. One has to be honest with the patient and tell him that it is impossible for any practitioner to

"know everything". Ask for time to double-check on the technology / progress that you are unaware of and look for the evidence to support use / against the use of treatment or medication before giving advice.

## What is your best memory of being a doctor in practice?

There are many best memories of being a doctor starting with graduation from medical school to becoming a practitioner. I do recall an incident involving a patient who was comatose after a submersion injury in her own private swimming pool. She had cardio-respiratory arrest for several minutes and was revived by a neighbour. She was admitted to intensive care and her family feared for the worst. She developed haemoglobinuria and renal impairment. Miraculously she recovered from hypoxic encephalopathy. On leaving the intensive care, she underwent rehabilitation and fully recovered physically and intellectually. The staff received a letter of thanks from the family and all of us felt that we have performed a deed that we can be proud of.

## Who or what has inspired you most in your career and life?

In medical school I had the opportunity of learning the art of medicine from pioneers that many of the younger generation have only heard about - Professor Ransom, Professor Monteiro, Dr Seah Cheng Siang. But it was from Professor Lee Yong Kiat that I learnt about ethics and the law. He served for many years at the Singapore Medical Council and he had a keen sense of fairness towards the doctor and the patient. On the wall of his office one can see the Oath of Hippocrates as well as Desiderata Happiness written by American writer Max Ehrmann. Desiderata begins with "Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence". This prose poem goes on to say "speak the truth quietly and clearly and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant. They too have a story". And ends with "Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you

conceive Him to be". And finally "With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy". It has served Professor Lee Yong Kiat in good times and bad times and I can say the same for myself. I would advise you to get hold of this prose poem as well as the Hippocratic Oath.



## Could you tell us something about yourself that not many people may know about, such as a special hobby or an interest that has kept you going over the years? How would you balance this activity with your busy work schedule and family life?

In my younger days I used to ski and also golf but now what I do enjoy most is to travel, see new places, different culture and people and above all, appreciate nature. Work-life balance is an aspiration that has been expounded recently. I tried to do that by having weekend outings with family and also travelling with the family during vacation. Years after these holidays, we still do revive those memories.