

# SMA NEWS



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# Come Grow Old with Me

The 42nd SMA  
National Medical  
Convention



L to R: A/Prof Chin Jing Jih, A/Prof Pang Weng Sun and Dr Chong Yeh Woei



Ms Tan Lay Keuan



Ms Ong Sik Yin



Participants registering for the event

# Come Grow

The 42nd SMA National Medical Convention, Come Grow Old with Me: Successful and Active Ageing in the Community, was held on 20 August 2011 at the Suntec Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The programme for the convention this year, thanks to the coordination and planning of Dr Lee Liang Tee, geriatrician from Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) and Honorary Secretary of the Society for Geriatric Medicine, Singapore, saw the invitation of healthcare professionals from various disciplines to share robust, evidence- and experience-based information on successful ageing, including preventive strategies on common problems encountered by the elderly. One of the key messages of the convention was to emphasise that while doctors continue to play key coordinating and therapeutic roles in the provision of long term chronic care, good holistic geriatric care for the population is only possible through the collaborative efforts of various healthcare professional groups, agencies and organisations.

In his opening address, SMA President Dr Chong Yeh Woei felt that the convention was timely given the ageing population, and advised the audience to learn how to invest in the next 40 years of their lives.

The convention's Organising Chairman, A/Prof Chin Jing Jih also noted in his welcome address that with the advent of the "silver tsunami", many treatments for geriatric problems have emerged. Some treatments are backed by good evidence but there are also those that are in the market just to "make a quick opportunistic buck" from the anxious and even phobic. Hence, he hoped that the convention would be able to clear up some misconceptions and provide some sound approaches in matters such as diet, nutrition, exercise and mental health, to name a few examples.

The convention kicked off with the keynote lecture, "Successful and Active Ageing", by A/Prof Pang Weng Sun, senior consultant in Geriatric Medicine at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH). Speaking to a crowded floor of more than 350 attendees, A/Prof Pang advocated that ageing is a normal phase in human life, and instead of denying it, one should instead prepare for it. Highlighting the importance of remaining healthy and well as far as possible, A/Prof Pang pointed out that steps such as maintaining a balanced diet and active lifestyle are probably more important and effective strategies than taking various kinds of supplements.



# Old with Me

By Gracia Ong and Denise Yuen

## Public Symposium

The Public Symposium, attended by members of the general public, then commenced with concurrent English and Mandarin sessions, featuring presentations on topics ranging from the judicious management of medications, to reaping the benefits of exercise while minimising the risk of injury.

### Managing multiple medications and health supplements safely and wisely

- English session: Ms Tan Lay Keuan, pharmacist, Ren Ci Hospital (RCH)
- Mandarin session: Ms Tan Keng Teng, pharmacist, TTSH

As patients often have trouble keeping track of their medications, the speakers provided useful tips on how to be a safe patient, such as keeping one's medication list regularly updated, understanding the functions of health supplements before starting on a course, and taking and storing medications safely.

### Food for life! Eating wisely and enjoyably into the golden years

- English session: Ms Chiam Mary Ann, senior dietician, Bright Vision Hospital
- Mandarin session: Ms Ong Sik Yin, dietician, Changi General Hospital (CGH)

Ms Chiam and Ms Ong discussed the importance of maintaining a balanced nutritious diet and practical tips on how to do so. They also explained what malnutrition is and how to prevent it. With individuals requiring lesser caloric intake as age increases, the speakers advised the audience to make calories count, and advocated a variety of nutrient-dense food options as well as portion control.

### Handling aches and pain in the elderly

- English session: Dr Lee Jer En, consultant, Geriatric Medicine, KTPH
- Mandarin session: Dr Tan Tee Yong, consultant pain specialist, Integrative Pain Centre

Dr Lee and Dr Tan explained that pain is a surrogate indicator of health, arising from a myriad of conditions such as inflammatory or musculoskeletal issues, and could in turn cause other medical problems. They recommended that those suffering from pain should seek a thorough consultation to understand the underlying causes. They also shared valuable advice on treatment and self-management of pain.



Dr Calvin Fones



A participant peppers a speaker with questions



Ms Khoo Sue Ann



L to R: Dr Chan Kin Ming, A/Prof Chin Jing Jih, Dr Bertha Woon, Dr Chong Mei Sian and Dr Chong Yeh Woei

## Exercise in older persons – deriving benefits, avoiding injuries

- English session: Mr Lim Kong Beng, senior physiotherapist, St Luke's Hospital
- Mandarin session: Ms Yong Limin, principal physiotherapist, Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital

Mr Lim and Ms Yong emphasised the importance of exercise, though the type of activities one does, be it cardiovascular or strength training, varies according to the intended goals. They also gave useful tips on how one can assess and select the appropriate exercises that are beneficial without risking injury. In general, they recommended that exercise for older persons be carried out in moderation and at low impact.

## Successful ageing – staying socially active through meaningful activities

- English session: Mr Lawrence Lim, senior medical social worker, TTSH
- Mandarin session: Ms Goh Su San, medical social worker, RCH

Mr Lim and Ms Goh advocated a body-mind-spirit approach, and advised that one could find meaning through engaging in hobbies or lifelong learning. Mr Lim cited several examples such as Dr Oon Chiew Seng, who started Apex Harmony Lodge in her 80s, to cater to the needs of patients with dementia. Ms Goh suggested various organisations that the elderly can join or facilities that they can use, like elderly care centres, so that they can avoid loneliness and continue to lead meaningful lives in their twilight years.

## Memory, mood and sleep – cultivating good mental health in the golden years

- English session: Ms Khoo Sue Ann, senior psychologist, KTPH
- Mandarin session: Ms Hia Soo Boon, psychologist, Institute of Mental Health

The speakers emphasised keeping one's mind active, and recommended activities such as web resources, physical activities and mahjong. Ms Khoo also encouraged the importance of "making happy", where one's attitude can be shaped through positive thinking. Ms Hia stressed that, contrary to popular opinion, the aged also require seven to

nine hours of sleep daily, just like people of all other ages, and a lack of sleep would affect memory negatively.

Members of the audience eagerly peppered the presenters with questions during the question and answer sessions. Several of them even stayed behind so that they could continue the discussions with the presenters. Some members of Teck Ghee Community Club, who attended the Mandarin sessions, commented that they enjoyed the talks and found them very useful.

## Lunch Symposium

In his welcome address to the participants of the Lunch and Medical Symposiums, A/Prof Chin Jing Jih reflected that while it is true that many Singaporeans are somewhat anxious about growing old, they are not so much concerned about whether they can live forever, but rather whether they will be able to remain independent for as long as possible, free from pain, suffering and disability. It is therefore important for doctors and other healthcare professionals to work closely together in a collaborative and integrated manner to guide patients to make wise choices and to meet patients' various physical and psychosocial needs in a holistic manner.

The Lunch and Medical Symposiums were therefore tailored specifically to: one, help equip participants with the knowledge and information to make good clinical judgements when treating their elderly patients, and two, to familiarise and connect participants with a network of paramedical services and community healthcare facilities.

One noteworthy platform that A/Prof Chin mentioned is the Primary Care Pages website (<http://www.primarycarepages.sg>), launched by the Agency for Integrated Care, which is designed to link doctors to relevant healthcare professionals and providers, information on chronic diseases, drugs and health products, and community health and social services.





The convention's Organising Committee strongly believes that having easy access to resources such as these, and the valuable clinical pearls shared at the convention will be of tremendous practical value to doctors when they manage their elderly patients in ambulatory and primary care settings.

The Lunch Symposium was attended by 110 participants, comprising doctors and medical students, who enjoyed a sumptuous buffet lunch while listening to the symposium presenters.

### Diagnosis of dementia in the clinical setting

- Dr Chong Mei Sian, senior consultant, Geriatric Medicine, TTSH  
Dr Chong explained the clinical definition of dementia, and the reversible and irreversible causes of the disease. She went through the process of diagnosing of dementia in a clinical setting. Some locally validated cognitive screening instruments for dementia include the Chinese Mini-Mental Status Examination, the Elderly Cognitive Assessment Questionnaire and the Clock Drawing Test. She also discussed the constraints and challenges doctors face when administering such tests in a busy ambulatory care setting.

### Management of dementia in an ambulatory GP clinical setting

- Dr Chan Kin Ming, senior consultant, Chan KM Geriatric & Medical Clinic  
Dr Chan then proceeded to discuss the clinical approach after diagnosing a patient to have dementia, which include the correction of potentially reversible factors and where possible, slowing down the irreversible factors. He discussed and compared the various drugs used to manage dementia, such as cholinesterase inhibitors and non-cholinergic neurotransmitter/neuropeptide modifying agents, including the pharmacological properties of each of these drugs. Dr Chan also proposed a framework for general practitioners (GPs) on when and who to refer for the different clinical complications related to dementia. In general, he suggested referring those with strong psychosis, delusions, hallucinations and other behavioural problems to psychiatrists; those with associated Parkinson's disease and strokes to neurologists; and those with multiple medical problems, polypharmacy or who are frail, to geriatricians.

## Medical Symposium

The Medical Symposium in the afternoon comprised a series of panel discussions and lectures, and saw an audience of more than 150 attendees, consisting of doctors and other healthcare professionals.

### Common surgeries in the elderly (cataract, total knee replacement) – what to advise?

- Dr Christopher Lien (Chair), Head and senior consultant, Community Geriatrics, CGH
- Dr Yeo Seng Jin, Director and senior consultant, Orthopaedic Surgery, Singapore General Hospital (SGH)
- Dr Yong Shao Onn, consultant, Ophthalmology, TTSH



The audience listening intently to the keynote lecture



GlaxoSmithKline (Panadol) booth



Agency for Integrated Care booth



Omron booth



Dr Grace Kong and Associates (Prudential) booth





L to R: Dr Vina Doshi, Dr Reshma Aziz Merchant and Dr Tham Weng Yew



Dr Chee Tek Siong



Eisal booth

Dr Lien, Dr Yeo and Dr Yong opened the symposium with their panel discussion. Addressing the areas of cataract and total knee replacement surgery, the panel shared with the audience the timing and indications for these two types of surgery, which treat two of the most common problems in older patients, i.e. cataract and osteoarthritis of the knees, respectively.

### The Community Eye Clinic

- Prof Donald Tan, Medical Director and senior consultant, Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC)

Prof Tan explained that the Community Eye Clinic (CEC) is an upcoming project that aims to enhance the delivery of eye care, and to meet the demands of Singapore's ageing population. GPs will be encouraged to refer patients to the CEC for non-serious cases, as well as routine eye checks. Through co-management, the CEC hopes to bring primary eye care to the community, while enabling timely management of urgent and serious eye conditions at SNEC.

### Holistic management of anxiety, depression and chronic insomnia in older persons

- A/Prof Calvin Fones, consultant psychiatrist, Fones Clinic

A/Prof Fones explained that the atypical presentation of syndromes presenting with issues, such as depression, was common and typically undiagnosed, as somatic complaints often mask underlying issues. With this in mind, he advised doctors to employ holistic management through medications as well as cognitive therapy, and to refer patients exhibiting severe symptoms, poor responses or suicide risks to the relevant specialists.

### Health screening for the elderly and geriatric assessment in a GP clinic – what's useful, practical and important?

- Dr Tham Weng Yew (Chair), home care physician, CODE 4 Pte Ltd
- Dr Reshma Aziz Merchant, Head and senior consultant, General Medicine, National University Hospital
- Dr Vina Doshi, consultant geriatrician, AgeWELL ARTSZ Medical Group Pte Ltd

Addressing the issue of where to begin, Dr Aziz Merchant suggested posing quick and comprehensive questions to cover assessment of gait, appetite, vision and hearing. Dr Doshi also recommended screening for chronic illnesses that have become increasingly common, and importantly, Dr Tham reiterated that GPs should not too easily dismiss a patient's decline as a result of old age as careful assessment will often reveal underlying serious but reversible medical conditions

### High blood pressure in the elderly: to treat or not to treat?

- Dr Chee Tek Siong, consultant cardiologist, Chee Heart Specialists Clinic Pte Ltd

Dr Chee pointed out that hypertension is typically confined to raised systolic blood pressure in older patients. He noted that GPs often commented on their difficulty or lack of confidence in treating patients with hypertension, and observed that studies had showed that treatment in those who were more than 80 years old reduced strokes, but there was no improvement (and even possibly increase) in total mortality. He also advised that it was useful to employ home



L to R: Dr Yeo Seng Jin, Dr Christopher Lien and Dr Yong Shao Onn



A/Prof Tang Choon Leong



Participants at the Lunch Symposium





Dr Lee Jer En

Health Promotion Board booth

blood pressure measurements, and look out for secondary causes of hypertension, such as renal artery stenosis or obstructive sleep apnea.

### Safe and effective prescribing for the older patient with multiple comorbidities and medications

- Dr Ee Chye Hua (Chair), consultant geriatrician, Elderly Care & Health Consultancy
- Dr Christopher Lien, Head and senior consultant, Community Geriatrics, CGH
- Dr Tang Eng Yeow, Director and senior consultant, Geriatric Medicine, KTPH

The speakers discussed the issues of compliance, polypharmacy and drug risks. They noted that, despite easier methods of taking medication via the use of sachets and blister packs, it was nonetheless still important, from the perspectives of safety and proper compliance, for patients to understand themselves the purposes and side effects of the drugs that they are taking.

### Practical tips in managing chronic constipation in geriatric patients

- A/Prof Tang Choon Leong, senior consultant, Colorectal Surgery, SGH
- A/Prof Tang highlighted that contrary to common belief, constipation often arises due to the issue of too much fibre rather than too little, insufficient dietary intake, and a lack of water. Noting that constipation could result from various causes, he recommended treatment using soluble and insoluble fibre, pro- and prebiotics,

increasing one's fluid intake and as a last resort, laxatives. He also advised that it was important to refer patients if they responded poorly or exhibited severe symptoms.

Dr Jeffrey Lum, who attended the Medical Symposium, commented that he found A/Prof Tang's talk on constipation the most fascinating. He added, "The panel discussion on the aspects of dealing with polypharmacy was also interesting and it is good that they are tackling this problem at the hospital level."

The 42nd SMA Medical Convention closed to resounding applause. The Organising Committee wishes to thank keynote speaker A/Prof Pang Weng Sun, all invited speakers, guests and participants for taking time off to participate in the event.

In addition, the committee would also like to express their appreciation to:

- Event sponsors: Dr Grace Kong and Associates, GlaxoSmithKline (Panadol), Jitron, Lee Foundation and Omron.
- Lunch Symposium sponsors: Eisai, Lundbeck and Novartis.
- Co-organisers: Agency for Integrated Care, Health Promotion Board and Thomson Medical Centre.
- Supporting organisers: Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital, Ren Ci Hospital and Teck Ghee Active Ageing Committee. **SMA**



Dr Tan Tee Yong

Dr Ee Chye Hua (left) and Dr Tang Eng Yeow