

By Ms Pauline Teo, Project Executive, SMA



(L-R): Dr Jason Yap Chin Huat, Dr T Thirumoorthy, Dr Mark O'Brien and Ms Kuah Boon Theng

SMA 11th Ethics and Professionalism Convention

20 & 24 OCTOBER 2007

As in previous years, the Convention aimed to raise awareness and promote ethics and professionalism in the medical field through the discussion of various issues at the Ethics and Professionalism Symposium and the SMA Lecture.

ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM SYMPOSIUM

The Ethics and Professionalism Symposium was held on 20 October 2007 at SaFra Mount Faber. With the theme “**Managing Risks in Medical Tourism and Aesthetic Practices**”, the Symposium attracted a crowd of more than 70 participants.

Distinguished speakers were Ms Kuah Boon Theng, Dr Mark O'Brien, Dr T Thirumoorthy and Dr Yap Chin Huat Jason.

The discussion was started by **Ms Kuah Boon Theng**, SMA Honorary Legal Advisor, with the topic “**Managing Risks in Medical Tourism and Aesthetic Practices**”. The various risks, namely financial risks, risks of violating ethical standards in advertising and giving incentives in exchange for referrals, and medico-legal risks that were involved in medical tourism and aesthetics practices were discussed. Besides sharing examples of legal cases, she advised doctors to be

sensitive to the needs of foreign patients seeking aesthetic practices and to be mindful of local ethical rules and guidelines in advertising and marketing of services.

Dr Mark O'Brien, Medical Director of Education and Training at MPS Risk Consulting, then presented “**Enhancing Communications and Informed Consent in Medical Tourism & Aesthetic Practices for Better Doctor-Patient Relationships**”. He gave an overview on two key communication strategies – assessing motivation and establishing expectations, to manage the litigation risk involved in reaching a shared decision between doctors and their patients. The role and skills required of a doctor, as well as the advantages of having a shared decision making approach between doctors and their patients were also discussed.

Dr T Thirumoorthy, Member, Board of Directors, SMA CMEP then spoke on “**Ethical Issues in Aesthetic Practices**”. In addition to providing a general overview on the ethical principles and obligations in clinical medicine, Dr Thirumoorthy touched on the professional and ethical issues in aesthetic practice, specifically SMC's ethical guidelines on professional misconduct.

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The Symposium was concluded by **Dr Yap Chin Huat Jason**, Member, Board of Directors, SMA CMEP with the topic “**Dealing with Medical Tourism Overseas – The Do’s and Don’ts**”. Dr Yap gave an overview on the responsibilities of doctors when dealing with medical tourism overseas. These include understanding foreign patients’ needs and choices and being aware of the various gaps that occur during medical treatments. He also shared “The Golden Rule” on how doctors could provide better care and concern to their foreign patients.

SMA LECTURE 2007

The prestigious SMA Annual Lecturership was instituted in 1963 to honour eminent and distinguished members who have made significant contributions to Medicine or the community. This year, the honour went to **Prof Woo Keng Thye**, who delivered the lecture

“**Physician Leadership**” on 24 October 2007 at the College of Medicine Building.

The lecture began with the premise that all doctors, by virtue of their training and profession, are leaders. Upon specialisation, the importance of possessing leadership qualities increases as doctors are expected to be effective in leading the specialty team. It is common knowledge that doctors have become leaders in various sectors of society. One of the fundamental advantages a doctor has over others in leadership position is his basic training to study and understand human nature. With years of practice and experience, the doctor, a student of human nature, has a good grasp of human behavior which enables him to become a better leader.

The full text of the SMA Lecture is published in the December 2007 issue of the *Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ)*. For the citation of Prof Woo Keng Thye, which was delivered by A/Prof Chan Yew Weng, please see page 9. ■