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An Idea Whose Time Has Come

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, “a unified day of action to celebrate and support hospice and palliative care around the world” falls on the second Saturday of October each year. Despite much progress made over the years from a humble 16-bed hospice ward in St Joseph’s Home in 1985 to today’s Singapore Hospice Council and its members’ expanding service offerings, the philanthropy of the Lien Foundation in setting up a dedicated centre for palliative care education and research, and the recognition of palliative medicine as a subspecialty by the Specialist Accreditation Board, much more remains to be done. As Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan says, “In the care of the dying, we are underperforming.” This theme issue of the SMA News commemorates World Hospice and Palliative Care Day,

bringing together an eclectic collection of contributions including policy perspectives, reminiscences of the pioneering days, poignant accounts of the journey into palliative care careers and the challenges that lie ahead.

Victor Hugo once wrote, “Greater than the tread of mighty armies is an idea whose time has come” and it is our intention that this issue offers you, the reader, a panorama of this powerful, complex and vitally important facet of modern medicine and society. I would like to thank all contributors for taking the time and effort to pen their thoughts. The evolving journey of palliative care in Singapore is a gripping tale of “an idea whose time has come” and we hope we have in some modest measure managed to capture and convey the human drama of this remarkable story.

Dr Jeremy Lim

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