



President's Message

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The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was held in Rwanda recently. As MMA is a member, we were involved in a Delegate Led Session at the People's Forum, held in conjunction with CHOGM. This event was on 21 June 2022 at Rwanda, themed '*Human Resource for Health and Health inequality in the Commonwealth: a critical appraisal of brain drain amongst health professionals and healthcare workers in the Commonwealth of Nations*'. I was invited as a Panellist/Speaker for this session.

Brain drain is an issue which is no stranger to us in Malaysia, with the loss of skilled medical workers happening over the years. We would like to believe that it is the pull factor of better economic

prospects that has lured our doctors overseas, but of late, the push factor is becoming more evident, i.e. poor work environment with uncertain career advancement pathway. This has led many of our young brains to pack their bags and move out.

Along with this session, I participated in the session conducted by the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association where the discussion was on Antimicrobial Resistance. A problem faced by many African nations is the easy availability of antibiotics without prescription despite laws mandating a prescription for antibiotics.

The People's Forum of the CHOGM themed '*Our Health, Our Planet, Our Future*', saw a very robust participation from civil society representatives and touched broadly

on several pertinent topics relevant to Malaysia as well, namely:

- Building Resilient and Equitable National Health Systems.
- Climate Justice and Leadership for Change in the Commonwealth.
- Health and Climate: Meeting the Immediate Challenge of Financing.

MMA has won the bid to host the Commonwealth Medical Association meeting in Kuala Lumpur in the month of November this year with Dr Murugaraj, our current President Elect taking over the reins as the President of the Commonwealth Medical Association.

The British Medical Association (BMA) held its Annual Representative Meeting in Brighton, UK on 27-29 June 2022. It was well



The Delegate Led Session at CHOGM

represented by doctors from all over the country as well as representatives from the United States, Canada, Uganda, Nigeria, Israel, Malta and Malaysia, to name a few. Though the topics brought up for discussion as well as the motions brought up for voting were mostly issues affecting the healthcare system in Great Britain, unsurprisingly many of the issues were also common to us in Malaysia.

Racism was a hot topic with the doctors, who felt that it is present within their healthcare system with some saying that they are unappreciated by patients due to race. There is also resistance to altering their names to an English one or to shorten it to enable easier identification of doctors. The sentiment was that one should be proud of their full name as given by their families.

The alleged genocide issue in the region of Xinjiang, China was debated. The BMA had during the World Medical Association (WMA) session in Paris brought up the motion to insist that the Chinese Medical Association (CMA) acknowledges that genocide is happening in Xinjiang, failing which the CMA would be expelled from WMA. The motion was not carried in the WMA Council meeting. Calling out a national medical association for neither acknowledging nor censuring an alleged wrong-doing of its

government is inappropriate, especially in the case of an authoritarian or communist government. This issue was brought up again at the BMA meeting where the motion was carried.

Similar to the rest of the world, the doctors were also very much concerned with the hidden pandemic of mental illness which may overwhelm mental health and primary care services in the country.

Another common issue is the training opportunities for junior doctors which was brought up for debate. There was also a call on the BMA to lobby for a legal requirement that all UK final year medical graduates applying to the foundation programme be guaranteed a place on the UK Foundation Programme

after suitable assessments. Unlike Malaysia, foundation training is not guaranteed in the UK. Foundation training is akin to our houseman training period.

Recently, our doctors have difficulties sourcing for their regular stock of medications for use in their daily practice. Though we have been assured by the pharmaceutical industry that it is a temporary problem that will eventually right itself and the Ministry of Health has opened its doors for private doctors to borrow from its stores, medication remains in short supply. Many doctors in stand alone clinics



With Dr Osahon Enabulele (President of Commonwealth Medical Association and President Elect of World Medical Association)



With Dr Mohammad Adib Khumaidi (President, Indonesian Medical Association)



With Colin Kirkpatrick (MPS)



With H.E. Sudha Devi Vasudevan (Chair of the Board of Governors, Commonwealth Foundation)