

President's Message



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The world view is changing.

We have the American President Donald Trump's aggressive agenda in his first 100 days, pledging action on everything from immigration, renegotiating trade deals to repealing Obamacare. The Kim Jong-nam's poisoning with cold war undertones at KLIA2 has unwittingly thrust Malaysia into the world stage amid intercontinental ballistic testing and anti-missile defense shield. The North-South Korea conflict has drawn in protest from China about the deployment of THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) system by the United States in South Korea.

A CCTV recording showed a well-planned daytime abduction of Pastor Raymond Koh on 11 February 2017 in Kelana Jaya. The abduction of a peaceful man in broad daylight has shaken the public confidence in our police to protect us. This was not in a far flung state of Sabah, but close to the Nation's capital.

The Malaysian Press is also the bearer of more bad news. Our Minister of Health Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam has said Malaysian's total healthcare expenditure stood at RM 52 billion a year with the public sector accounting for 52% and the private health sector 48%. The health spending per capita stood at RM 1,626 in 2014, a two and half time increase over 17 years.

SOCSCO also reported more pre mature deaths and disabilities (under 60) due to non-communicable diseases in 2016, causing an average of 46 deaths or disabilities a day.

With the recent Parliament sitting, many reports were also about the poor performance of our Housemen with up to 30% failing to complete within the time frame due to incompetence, causing a backlog for new Housemen joining the service, (NST, March 21).

New Housemen have also entered the debate with complaints of long hours and unhappiness with the seniors.

The entrepreneurial spirits have produced 5000 medical graduates a year. While we have Elon Musk, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, we also have Hermes Birkin as our status symbol. In producing so many doctors in so short a time, have we become as Richard Dawkins said, mere DNA replicators? "A DNA that neither cares nor knows. DNA just is. And we dance to its music." We have become a "selfie generation" trying to escape to a virtual world of gaming. Alternate news, alternate facts, and alternate reality!

Amid all these bad news, I had the experience of the worst traffic jam in KL at around 5.00pm on a Friday going from Wisma Sejarah to KL Sentral. It took me nearly two and half hours counting the 45 minutes wait for a taxi. After this experience, I have more sympathy for my KL colleagues. The stress level is definitely higher with the hustle and bustle of politics and big cities living. Indeed behavioral scientists have found the lack of control of our circumstances causes a lot of unhappiness.

This brings me to the question of what we should do at MMA. The search for answer is never ending. We have to admit, at best, we are a lobby group. Things may not change as fast as we wish. I have learnt to be patient and continue to lobby for our interests. The decision makers can choose whether to listen to us or not.

WE choose our leaders at the AGM, and that is why it is important to come to the AGM both to voice out your concerns about what things ought to be.

I have been asked by my co-Organising Chairman Dr Hooi Lai Ngoh to write about the business of our Annual General Meeting (AGM). This year's AGM will be in St Giles Wembley Hotel, Penang, from 18 to 21 May. The SCHOMOS and PPS AGMs will run concurrently from 2.30pm to 4.30pm on Thursday, 18 May. Both the SCHOMOS and PPS will elect their respective committee for the year. The two sections are the power houses of MMA, attending to various meetings with the stakeholders and engaging directly with our members.

AGM

The main AGM will start at 9.00am on 19 May. The quorum shall be fifty (50) members of whom at least twenty (20) shall be delegates from other branches besides Penang. Every branch of the Association shall appoint their delegates (10% of the State membership) at their own State AGM. Every member is entitled to attend the AGM but only the appointed delegates are allowed to vote. We had attracted close to 400 delegates per AGM and the main event had been the election in previous years.

The Association is governed by its Constitution and the AGM is its principal body. The principal function of the AGM is to conduct election for the office bearers i.e. President-Elect, Honorary General Secretary, Honorary General Treasurer and two (2) Honorary Deputy Secretaries. The AGM then accepts and declares the President Elect of the preceding year as President, and the President of the previous year as Immediate Past President. These office bearers with the Branch Representatives, Chairmen of SCHOMOS and PPS constitute the Council of MMA, the principal body acting for the AGM during the year.

The AGM shall receive reports from the Council of the matters affecting the Association during the year. Reports of the activities of the Association, Ethical and other committees will be tabled. The Statement of Account will be tabled by the Honorary General Treasurer and supported by the Internal and External Auditors. Our Statement of Account had been contentious in recent years. I hope this year we will be able to give a good account. The HGT will also present his budget for the current year.

The Council

The Council shall meet at least four times a year and shall act on behalf of the Association in all matters as in the Constitution and approved at the next AGM.

The Executive Committee

At the first meeting of the Council after the AGM, the Executive Committee is appointed. Members of this committee are the President, President Elect, Immediate Past President, Honorary General Secretary, Honorary General Treasurer, the Two Honorary Deputy Secretaries, Chairman of SCHOMOS and Chairman of PPSMMA. This committee is in charge of the day to day running of the Association, between the meetings of the Council and to carry out its mandate.

Committees

MMA is what it is because of its committees and its members actively contributing and working. I list the following committees with the Chairmen to acknowledge their contributions. These committees are also appointed and approved by the Council.

Ethics: Dato' Dr P. Vijaya Singham

Medical Journal of Malaysia: Datuk Prof Dr Lekhraj Rampal

Berita MMA: Dato Dr R Mohanadas

Fees Schedule: Dr Mohamed Namazie

ASH: Datuk Prof Dr Lekhraj Rampal

Plantation Health: Dr Edmond Fernandez

AIDS: Assoc Prof Dr Koh Kwee Choy

Computer Technical: Dr Vasu Pillai

Health of Older Person: Dr Sumitra S.

CPR: Dr Sri Latha B.

CPD: Datuk Dr P Krishnan

Adolescent Health: Dr Kasturi Maniam Nair

Right to Health: Datuk Dr Teoh Siang Chin

Traditional Medicine: Datuk Dr N Athimulam

Medical Education: Datuk Dr N Athimulam

VoC: Datuk Prof Dr Lekhraj Rampal

Insurance: Dr Ranjan John

National Health Policy: Dr John Chew

Constitution: Dr John Chew

Building: Dr John Chew

Election: Datuk Dr Athimulam

I encourage more members to participate and contribute by joining these committees. The Application Forms are out already.

The President

The duties of the President are stipulated in the Constitution Clause 9 (2) namely the Chair of all General meetings and the meetings of the Council. The scope of the duties is pretty onerous and I have depended heavily on Dr Ravi, President Elect and Dr Ashok Immediate Past President to share some of the burden. The extra burden for me is the travelling between Kuching and Kuala Lumpur for the meetings. I am also grateful for the Executive Committee's understanding and assistance.

One of the President's duties is to deal with the Press. The ubiquitous nature of social media has made this job a 24 hours affair and I have also drew heavily on the Executive Committee expertise to answer the many Press queries. Some members might not agree to the President's position on certain matters; however it is the prerogative of the President to answer what he sees fit.

A case in point is the extreme negativity I have to encounter with the bad publicity of the medical profession in the last one year. Unemployed young doctors, bullying by seniors, doctors being hauled up for selling medical examination for driving licenses etc. In the midst of trying to address the problems, I feel there are still good opportunities for young doctors to map out a satisfying medical career. Although the competition for jobs is getting tougher, our patients should always remain our top most concern. Quoting Sir William Osler, "The Practice of Medicine is an art, not a trade, a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head." My advice to the young doctors is to learn as much as possible. Join an association and find a mentor, for it is a long and arduous journey. There is so much more to learn in the present age. Our age of "postgraduate skepticism" requires us to acquire a PhD to gain some legitimacy.

In closing, I urge all of you my fellow colleagues to come and attend the AGM MMA in Penang. The AGM of the MMA each year is a great time for doctors and their families to meet, congregate, gel, establish friendships and comradeships. It is an invaluable opportunity for us to share our struggles and successes in the medical arena. We learn firsthand knowledge from each other of what is happening in other states besides our own and we can then be better equipped in our profession.

What better way for Doctors to include their families in this very important yearly event. Attending the AGM and with a holiday incorporated in, is an excellent opportunity for family togetherness and for spouses to understand more of the medical profession.

It is a good way to get to know our Malaysia as each state has a chance to host the AGM yearly.

I hope the durians are waiting for us in Penang.