

President's Message



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A year ago when I took office as President, a new government had also taken office two months before. There was a lot of expectation for the new government, especially since Tun Mahathir Mohamed was sworn in as the 7th Prime Minister.

Now the time has come for me to hand over the baton to the President-Elect to take over the reins of MMA. It is also the time for me to visit the events of the past year and post a "report card".

The year started off with the Annual General Meeting on 29 June 2018. Earlier in the first Council meeting in 2017, I had proposed that our annual meeting be rebranded to "National MMA Convention and Scientific Congress" with emphasis on scientific content, keeping in line with the requirement for compulsory continuing professional development. This was accepted and the 2018 meeting was rebranded with the new name and the AGM of the Association became part of the Convention and not the main event. This year, it is being continued and a formal resolution to amend the Constitution will be debated at the 2019 AGM.

The year has been very busy and little did I realise the amount of time that needs to be spent on attending to the numerous issues that arise. There was not a single day, including the weekends, that I could call as my personal time. As I write this, I have so far attended one hundred and ninety meetings both internal and external, and that will reach two centuries by the time I relinquish the office.

In my inaugural speech during the annual banquet, which was graced by DYMM Paduka Seri Sultan of Perak and DYMM Raja Permaisuri Perak, I had urged YB Minister of Health, Dr Dzulkefli Ahmad to look into several issues that had been long-standing without resolution and needed his urgent attention.

Top of the list was the GP Fee Schedule 7 which had been languishing without any political will to resolve.

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For the first time after nearly six years of negotiations in MOH, YBMK presented the Schedule 7 to the Cabinet which promptly deferred the decision. This created an uproar in the GP community and YBMK has called for a town hall meeting of the GPs on 11 June 2019.

There has been a flurry of activity since the announcement and it is estimated that at least 1000 GPs will attend the meeting. MMA has allotted money to the branches to bus in their members for this unprecedented event. YBMK has shown his sincerity in engaging with the GPs and we have expressed our full support for him. With this, we hope that the other Cabinet members would be convinced and consent to the harmonisation of Schedule 7 with Schedule 13.

The other matters involving the private sector that were highlighted include FOMEMA and MCO. As per the agreement reached with the Managed Care Organisations (MCOs) and the MOH, MMA prepared the Common Mutual Agreement and the first meeting attended by several MCOs was held in the MOH and chaired by the Director of Bahagian Amalan, Dr Ahmad Razid. Since there were several controversial matters that were raised by MCOs it was decided to have more meetings to iron out the various contentious clauses. It was also decided that the definition of what is fee-splitting in the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act (PHFSA) and also in the MMC Code of Professional Conduct, be referred to the Attorney General's Chambers for clarification. This would be handled by the legal advisor to the MOH.

The medical officers who are now on contract have a bleak future since nearly 3000 of them will not be absorbed into permanent positions. I had raised this matter with YBMK as well as the senior officers in MOH. I had urged the YBMK and Director General to find ways to keep all of them for an additional two years on contract for them to acquire more experience before they come out into private practice.

This year it was decided to reactivate the National Health Policy Committee which had been inactive for some time. The Past President Datuk Dr Teoh Siang Chin was appointed the Chairman. He immediately set to work to revisit the 1999 MMA publication "Health for All – Reforming Health Care in Malaysia"

Several meetings were held and very prominent healthcare economists and healthcare policy experts were invited to speak and share their views on the need for reform in healthcare and financing in Malaysia. To end the term a public forum has been arranged on 15 June 2019, and we hope to get the various stakeholders views on what they expect from reforms in healthcare. On this occasion, the various medical associations will get together to formulate a common stand to be called the "Declaration of Titiwangsa" which will be presented to the Minister of Health.

In the international arena, I attended the British Medical Association Annual Representatives Meeting in Brighton. The differences in how the meeting of BMA is held were very obvious and we should emulate this by allocating more time for debate and discussion on health policies and other matters related to medical professionals, medical students and other related concerns like the environment. I am glad to note that at the forthcoming AGM, a resolution on radioactive waste disposal and environmental hazards will be tabled for debate.

This was followed by an invitation to attend the APEC Business Ethics for SME Forum in July 2018. MMA was chosen to be on the panel to address certain specific areas on the MMC code of professional conduct that impacted the pharmaceutical and medical devices industries.

The Annual General Assembly of Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania (CMAAO) hosted by MMA was held in Penang in September 2018. This was a very successful meeting on Universal Health Coverage. It was also marked by the strong presence of the Junior Doctors Network members who adopted the Penang Declaration on Bullying.

Other significant international meetings in which we participated include the World Medical Association (WMA) Council Meeting in Riga, Latvia and the General Assembly in Iceland. While the attendance at the General Assembly was quite useful, I found the

attendance at Council meeting is less than satisfactory if we are not in the Council of WMA. I decided that I would not attend the WMA Council meeting held in Santiago, Chile in April and also to save on the expenses for international travel. I hope the future MMA Council members would decide wisely in approving attendance at international meetings. Only those that are useful should be attended, otherwise, it just becomes another trip with no experience gained.

Midterm Medical Association of South East Asian Nations (MASEAN) meeting was held in Cebu, Philippines. The regional meetings give us opportunities to network with our colleagues in the region and share notes on health care matters and policies that affect the professionals. It has been a tradition that all the Exco members attend the regional meeting and it was no different this year.

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As I prepare to step down, I would like to thank all the members of MMA who had placed their trust in me to lead the largest and perhaps the oldest medical organisation in the country. I appreciate all the support and encouragement given to me and I will certainly cherish this. The Exco and the Council

have been very cooperative except for occasional hiccups which are usual for a large organisation like MMA.

Dissenting views must be taken for what it is worth and must be considered as democracy in action but the team spirit must always prevail as the members have elected the office bearers to manage the affairs of the Association. I will be failing in my duty if I do not recognise the tremendous assistance provided to me by our COO Rissa who is a repository of knowledge and information pertaining to MMA. All the other secretariat staff have been diligent in their work and without them, nothing will move. Finally, I wish the incoming President and his team all the best as they embark upon a new adventure, and I would certainly be available if ever my assistance is needed.

I would like to wish all the Muslim members "EID MUBARAK".

In my first President's message in July 2018, I had quoted an Arab proverb and in my last message, I would like to repeat it as it seems to be quite apt.

"The dogs bark but the Caravan moves on"