

# President's Message



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September saw MMA participate as a member country at the 34th General Assembly of the Confederation of Medical Associations of Asia and Oceania (CMAAO), a gathering of World Medical Associations that was held in Goa, India from 5 – 7 September 2019. This year's symposium was themed A Path to Wellness.

More than 15 countries participated in the conference including Australia, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and other countries of Asia. At the conference, country representatives of various national medical associations presented reports of healthcare status in their respective countries.

At the gathering, CMAAO President Dr KK Aggarwal, pledged to promote Path to Wellness to all member countries stating that "with the increasing of lifestyle diseases, environmental pollution and rising anti-microbial resistance, it is time for the healthcare professionals from member countries to champion this course collectively and also raise collective consciousness among the public."

Adding to his comments, Dr Mari Michinaga, Secretary General, CMAAO, said, "Wellness is a concept that is not exclusive of communities or nations. It is a collective goal that requires collective action. Wellness is health in all dimensions and the concept as expanded to a population and civilization involves the collective effort of all stakeholders."

At the close of the conference, all member countries pledged their commitment to One Health, Path to Wellness – a concept recognising that the health of the

people is connected to that of animals, plants and the environment that we all share. Traditionally, as medical practitioners, our healthcare had been focused more on treating diseases and not preventing them. However, with the escalating incidence of lifestyle diseases, the model is now shifting from sickness to wellness care.



*MMA President's presentation on Path to Wellness*



*L-R : Dr Ravindran Naidu, Prof Dato' Dr M Subramaniam, Dr Ganabaskaran, Dr Thirunavukarasu and Dr Koh Kar Chai at the 34th General Assembly*



*CMAAO participants*

Wellness applies to everyone irrespective of whether they are healthy or suffer from some health condition. The theme of One Health, Path to Wellness thus was not only relevant but also timely and significant given the challenges that health systems across the world currently face. Malaysian Medical Association has pledged its commitment towards this.

Back home, in Malaysia, increasing the retirement age to 65, health issues associated with vaping and the contract and permanent positions for House Officers and doctors were among the issues that were making the headlines. In our comments to the media regarding the contracts and permanent positions, we stated that the contract positions are inevitable. However, the remuneration as mentioned by JPA should be in accordance to the contract nature of the position. We had also stated that contract positions are normally remunerated higher than a permanent employee. JPA will need to ensure that the benefits enjoyed will be equal between all civil servants, including the access to leave, loans and healthcare benefits. The finer details will definitely be scrutinised by CUEPACS and all employee associations of the Majlis Bersama Kerajaan. We have called for more engagements between government and stakeholders on this.

September was also the month a few states in Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak were blanketed by the South East Asian trans-boundary haze. Several schools were closed in several states including in the administrative capital Putrajaya and many Malaysians were also unable to participate in the Malaysia Day celebrations as the API readings had reached unhealthy levels. Apart from the health issues it can cause, the haze had also affected businesses as many open air eateries experienced a drop in customers who chose to stay indoors. The usual cloud seeding was done in certain areas but unfortunately, no real solution has been found despite our years of experience!

In mid-September, I had a scheduled trip, thankfully away from the haze, to Chennai to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of my alma mater Stanley College. Our batch had the distinction of being the first to do our first year of MBBS in Stanley Medical College. The classes for earlier batches were held in nearby arts colleges.

It was a wonderful feeling seeing our teachers and classmates of 50 years ago once again. It was great to see our anatomy Professor Dr Ramasamy who taught our class of '69 (now 96 years old!) speaking to us with so much clarity and enthusiasm while telling us (who



*CMAAO Treasurer Dr Yee Shing Chan (3rd from left) and CMAAO President (centre) with representatives of NMAs pledging for One Health, Path to Wellness*



*MMA President (centre) with class of '69 alumni at the Stanley Medical College Golden Jubilee celebrations in Chennai*

are now mostly in our 70s) to consider our age as just numbers and to move forward in our endeavours.

Last but not least, I am pleased to announce that MMA will be launching a CSR programme to raise awareness on Care for Older Persons as well as Organ Donations on 18 January 2020. These initiatives are being planned as I see there is a much bigger role we can play as a national medical association.

I have mentioned before in a previous edition of Berita, there is a need for increased awareness on the needs of our older population as Malaysia will soon reach ageing nation status. There are also as many as 21,000 Malaysians who are in need of organ donations as has been reported in the media. This CSR programme will be a platform to highlight these issues and concerns. Do look out for updates and more details in the coming editions of Berita MMA.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish a Happy Deepavali to all those who will be celebrating and all members celebrating their birthdays in October, a Happy Birthday!

Have a pleasant and enjoyable October!