

**SPEECH BY DR S R E SAYAMPANATHAN, MASTER OF THE  
ACADEMY OF MEDICINE SINGAPORE, AT THE INDUCTION COMITIA  
OF THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, SINGAPORE ON  
6 JULY 2019 AT THE ACADEMIA@SGH**

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Mr Chan Heng Kee, Permanent Secretary of Health, Ministry of Health  
Singapore

Council Members

Fellow Academicians

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. A very good afternoon to all of you. On behalf of the Council, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Induction Comitia of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore.

2. Firstly, let me thank our Guest-of-Honour, Mr Chan Heng Kee, for taking time off from his busy schedule and spending his precious Saturday afternoon with us to grace and witness this significant annual event of the Academy.

3. This afternoon, we bear witness to the induction of new Fellows into the Academy. To our new Fellow Academicians, my heartiest congratulations and welcome on board. You are now a part of us, helping the Academy to preserve and advance our medical profession. You will also be taking your pledge later, that as a Fellow of the Academy, you will conduct your practice of medicine in accordance with the highest standards and ideals of Medicine.

4. The Academy of Medicine, Singapore was formed in 1957 with 34 members. Today, the Academy has grown to more than 3,700 members with 13 Colleges and 4 Chapters. This dynamic diversity also presents strength as these specialists, with their extensive experiences and knowledge, are housed under one roof in a harmonious and cohesive composition under the Academy.

5. In the Strategic Planning meeting of the Academy Council, we reviewed at great length the perennial challenges facing the role and relevance of the Academy and the strategies to inspire stronger membership growth. It was affirmed that we need to persevere on the priorities to strengthen the Academy's role in advocacy and to be more active in advancing professionalism, upholding professional standards and contributing responsibly to the national healthcare agenda.

6. While setting our strategies and planning new initiatives, it is equally important for us to always bear in mind that these initiatives align with the national healthcare policies. Allow me to highlight a few initiatives embarked by the Academy, with the involvement of our Colleges and Chapters, in supporting the Ministry's Beyond Healthcare 2020 vision to meet our long-term care needs in a sustainable manner.

7. As the leading professional organisation embracing all specialties and sub-specialties, we are pleased to have contributed to the fee benchmarks through our Colleges' and Chapters' representatives, who actively participated in many feedback sessions held by the Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee. Fee Benchmarks is one of the several initiatives to drive better value in our healthcare system and we really appreciate the important inputs to this effort by our Fellow Academicians. The Academy welcomed the much-awaited publication by the Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee and will continue to work with the Ministry to further calibrate it as well as to review other procedures.

8. Another initiative is the multi-disciplinary collaboration with the Agency for Care Effectiveness. ACE is the national health technology assessment agency in Singapore, established by the Ministry in 2015, to

drive better decision-making about clinically effective and cost-effective patient care. We are currently working on a project called the 'Appropriateness Criteria for Use of Imaging Technology (ACUITY)' which seeks to formulate a set of local guidelines in three important clinical domains: MRI of low back pain, CT and MRI of headache, and chest radiographs in asymptomatic local individuals. Members of the ACUITY Guidelines Committee and the respective Workgroups are represented by our Fellows from various Colleges and Chapters.

9. Addressing the issue of our ageing population, rise in chronic diseases and co-morbidities, as well as acute medical manpower challenges, the Academy has piloted a tripartite programme in January this year. The Hospital Medicine Diploma Programme, launched in collaboration with the Singapore Health Services and Ministry of Health, is a two-year diploma programme that aims to equip clinicians with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes so as to provide generic acute care for any hospitalised patients, especially those with multiple co-morbidities, in the medical, surgical and other ward settings. These clinicians, being trained to fit their roles, will augment the specialists such that they add efficiency to the system with a lowered cost to the provision of high standard of care.

10. Let me now touch on another fundamental role of the Academy, that is to represent the views and interests of the specialists. It is essential for the profession to have a safe, balanced and effective environment to enable doctors to look after our patient's interest and safety, as the practice of medicine is dynamic and continues to evolve and advance at an accelerated pace. An important initiative which the Academy, together with the College of Family Physicians Singapore, have worked with the Singapore Medical Council, is to develop a support framework to assist SMC process its complaints and disciplinary cases in a timely manner.

11. With the new SMC-AMS-CFPS framework in place, the SMC Complaints Committee, when needed, has the option to request the Academy for opinion or report by relevant experts to aid the Complaints Committee in its investigations before reaching a decision. If the disciplinary inquiry is contested, the same expert may be required to attend the inquiry and give the evidence on behalf of the SMC. We hope the new framework will help enhance SMC's Complaints Committee and Disciplinary Tribunal processes in maintaining the standard of care, serving both the profession and community.

12. The Academy has also recently formed the Chapter of Pain Medicine Physicians to provide advisory opinions on the training and

credentialing requirements needed for pain medicine physicians to perform competently; general pain management options; and specific interventional procedures. The Chapter will also provide expert opinions on matters related to pain management, as and when the need arises, to the Ministry of Health and other government agencies and organisations. I am pleased to add that the new Chapter is already actively involved in the Ministry's Joint Committee for Opioids Control to advise on the development of a "National Guidelines on the Safe Prescribing of Opioids" to guide healthcare professionals involved in the prescribing of opioids, together with the active participation of the Colleges and Chapters.

13. Through these initiatives, in particular our advocacy efforts and professional opinions by our Fellows, we hope to continue playing our part in addressing the key challenges that our healthcare system is facing, including identifying gaps, prioritising and exploring new areas of focus. Over the years, the Academy has built a close working relationship with the Ministry of Health, an association and partnership of mutual trust and respect which we hope to continue to strengthen over time. We will continue our active engagement with the governing and regulatory bodies to improve and deliver better quality and safer care, and to ensure healthcare remains affordable and sustainable for the population.

14. Last but not least, I would like to congratulate the graduates of the Master of Health Professions Education Singapore and Staff Registrar Scheme Diploma programmes. To the teaching faculty of the MHPE-S programme, thank you for your passion, enthusiasm, valuable time and professionalism in producing better clinician educators for Singapore. My heartiest congratulations also to the Annals Best Publication and Gold Reviewer Award recipients.

15. The greatest asset of the Academy is our Fellows. All those initiatives which I have mentioned will not be possible without the participation and contribution by many dedicated Fellows. We hope that more will join as Fellows to support our effort in helping to shape and influence important healthcare policies and to promote high standard of professional competency.

16. Let me end with a quote by Helen Keller: “**Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.**” With that, I thank you.