

**SPEECH BY DR KOH POH KOON, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE,
MINISTRY OF HEALTH, AT THE VIRTUAL INDUCTION COMITIA OF
THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, SINGAPORE ON SATURDAY, 12
MARCH 2022, 2:30PM**

Professor Teo Eng Kiong, Master, Academy of Medicine, Singapore

Council Members

Distinguished Guests

Fellows, Colleagues and Friends

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. A very good afternoon. It is my pleasure to join you at the Induction Comitia of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AMS).
2. Today marks a momentous occasion as we witness the conferment of new inductees as Fellows of AMS. I would also like to congratulate the graduates of the Master of Health Professions Education, Staff Registrar Scheme Diploma and Hospital Clinician Scheme programmes, as well as the Annals award winners.
3. This is the first virtual Induction Comitia conducted by the AMS as we are living in unprecedented times. Many of you have been fighting the COVID-19 pandemic tirelessly, working under very significant pressure, in both physically and emotionally difficult conditions. I would like to extend

my deepest appreciation for your professionalism, hard work, and personal sacrifices as well that have kept Singapore and Singaporeans safe.

4. To the newly inducted Fellows, as you celebrate your official conferment today, let us also not forget that with it comes great responsibility and obligation, a point that the Master of AMS has made as well. Having been granted the power and privilege of professional autonomy, each of us as Fellows now have the duty to maintain high standards of professionalism and ethics to enhance self-governance and safeguard self-regulation. Over the years, there has always been pressure from external sources to take away some of these self-governance and self-regulation from our profession. Therefore, it is each and every one of our responsibility to ensure that we safeguard this not just in the interest of our profession, but also in how we deliver care for patients.

5. Being a member of a professional body like AMS promotes interaction amongst your peers in your specialty and across different specialties, and provides you with relevant support in your specialty practice. Do come forward and serve by contributing your professional expertise, opinions and experiences, which would help shape the national healthcare agenda.

ROLE OF THE ACADEMY

6. 2022 marks the 65th anniversary of the AMS. Since being inaugurated in 1957, AMS has been championing the postgraduate medical education and professional development of medical specialists. It stays focused on advancing its strategic priorities which are: (1)

strengthening its advocacy role to shape and influence healthcare policies; (2) advancing professionalism and upholding competency standards; and (3) enhancing self-governance and self-regulation.

7. Today, AMS has a total of 13 Colleges and five independent Chapters, the latest being the Chapter of Sleep Medicine Physicians formed in August last year. The AMS has a rich pool of over 4,000 Fellows from all specialties under its umbrella. Congratulations on being part of this specialists' fraternity. To our new inductees, your knowledge and skills will be an indispensable boost to the AMS's ongoing efforts of meeting the evolving healthcare needs of Singaporeans in the healthcare sphere.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH MOH

8. Being the largest professional group of medical and dental specialists in Singapore, AMS frequently engages with the Ministry of Health (MOH) to promote medical excellence and the delivery of world-class healthcare. The Ministry enjoys a close relationship with the AMS that has been strengthening over the years through our regular engagements. In one such dialogue which I attended on 4 December 2020, the Council shared about AMS's future plans that would support and reinforce self-regulation for the profession and its commitment to providing specialists lifelong learning post residency programmes. Those are important areas worth pursuing and have a definite impact on how our profession will develop for many years to come.

9. In the area of advocacy, AMS is represented in many of MOH's workgroups and committees. The Master of AMS has listed some of them earlier. In November last year, 22 specialty representatives from the

Colleges and Chapters had consultation sessions with MOH to assist the Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee in developing surgeon fee benchmarks for Tables of Surgical Procedures. These help to set standards for practitioners and enable patients to make better informed decisions on care options. We have seen this being extended to anaesthetic fee benchmarks as well and many of our anaesthesiologists have been involved; thank you for that.

10. Another example is the Multilateral Healthcare Insurance Committee (MHIC) established in April last year, a platform through which MOH, doctors, insurers and hospitals collaborated to enhance Singapore's healthcare insurance system. AMS is part of the MHIC Workgroup to provide recommendations on ensuring quality, safe, cost-effective and affordable healthcare for Singaporeans. I am glad that with the participation of all the key stakeholders in the MHIC framework, we were able to come to a consensus to gradually refine the Integrated Shield Plan (IP) system in Singapore for the betterment of clinicians and patients. The Academy also played an important role in the administration of the Clinical Claims Resolution Process (CCRP), an initiative that aims to resolve IP claim disputes of a clinical nature. Though it is quite new, I believe the CCRP is important in resolving unhappy disputes between patients, insurers and clinicians related to how their clinical claims were processed. The CCRP was proposed by MHIC and announced by MOH last November. As a key partner in the development and management of the CCRP, AMS devotes its expertise to delivering and sustaining this initiative for a sustainable healthcare system. In addition, it is important that Fellows of the Academy, representing the different specialties, also step forward to participate and serve in this initiative. This is part and

parcel of self-governance, and will keep us on the forefront of being the voice of the profession.

11. This past week, at the Committee of Supply (COS) debate in Parliament, MOH announced the Healthier SG strategy. The aim is to maintain the population's health despite an ageing population. This will entail greater preventive care that shifts the focus of care delivery and have some of this preventive care anchored in primary care settings. I envision that the Chapter of Family Medicine of the AMS will be playing key roles in uplifting the standards of your fellow primary care colleagues.

12. Also at the COS, I announced the formation of the National Wellness Committee for Junior Doctors. There has been quite a lot of public cause on the issue of working hours and workload of junior doctors. The committee will be reviewing the workflow models, working hours and career and training opportunities for our junior doctors. The AMS is already playing a role through the assessment of doctors undergoing training for the Hospital Clinicians track, and I expect that Fellows from AMS will be providing your further input on possible changes to the care model in Singapore. This whole workstream is not just about reducing working hours for junior doctors, but about the entire care model change that must take place now in hospitals. It will involve all levels of hospital care from senior to junior doctors. I hope that all our clinicians will participate in these discussions too.

COVID-19 INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS HEALTHCARE NEEDS

13. With the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare professionals need to adapt very quickly to the necessary changes in practice. We have

had to take on newer ways of practice such as telemedicine and e-prescription in the past year. AMS, through its Colleges and Chapters, has developed and published guidelines and consensus statements for various specialties, to provide guidance to our healthcare professionals on the changes in practice as well as in the management of our patients during the pandemic. As Singapore gradually transits to a COVID-resilient nation, there will be a need to streamline and simplify many of our healthcare processes and public health measures. Certainly, within hospitals as well, some ways in which patients are co-warded, how we manage COVID-19 positive patients and our BAU workload will need to be relooked at. AMS stepped up to provide MOH with feedback on issues such as our vaccine rollout to vulnerable population groups and easing the strain of rostered routine testing on the healthcare workforce. Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, the AMS's Colleges and Chapters have also supported MOH's efforts in engagement through the many webinars for our healthcare professionals to provide updates on latest COVID-19 scientific findings and sharing of best practices. Many of our physicians from the Chapter of Infectious Disease Physicians, College of Physicians, Singapore have been quite active in this aspect, and we thank them for it.

CLOSING

14. As doctors, we share the responsibility of advancing the field of medicine. I am confident you will contribute towards setting professional standards, moulding the healthcare system to meet the needs of our population, and elevating patient care along the way.

15. In closing, I once again congratulate the Academy's new Fellows and graduates, and Annals award winners. Remember that you are the

catalyst for healthcare transformation. So go forth, do good, do right, and do well. Thank you.