CMAAO 2019 – Singapore Medical Association

Path to Wellness
Wellness

• “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

• https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/constitution

• Many countries progressively moving away from episodic treatment of disease/illness, to a more holistic approach to health/wellness
Recent changes

• Ministry of Health (MOH) Committee of Supply 2019 initiatives
  • Subsidised health screening for certain eligible age groups, more tests offered
  • Expansion of Primary Care Networks scheme [multi-disciplinary team of doctors, nurses and primary care coordinators for more holistic management of their chronic conditions]
  • Expansion of Community Nursing team [personalised, coordinated care to seniors with different care needs and allow them to age-in-place in the community]
  • Caregiver Support Action Plan [a) Care navigation; b) Financial support; c) Workplace support; d) Caregiver respite services; and e) Caregiver empowerment and training]
Recent changes [con’t]

• Ministry of Health (MOH) Committee of Supply 2019 initiatives [con’t]
  • Patient Empowerment for Self-Care Framework [empower patients with diabetes to co-own their care journey]
  • School-based HPV vaccination
  • Minimum Legal Age for the sale, purchase, use and possession of tobacco products was raised to 19 on 1 January 2019, and will be raised to 21 over the next two years. Standardised packaging with enlarged graphic health warnings for all tobacco products will also be introduced in 2020
  • Ban on Partially Hydrogenated Oils
  • Enhanced Community Mental Health Masterplan
Recent changes [con’t]

• Ministry of Health (MOH) Committee of Supply 2019 initiatives [con’t]
  • intake for Medicine increased significantly from more than 300 in 2010 to about 500 in 2018. The need to recruit overseas-trained locals will moderate and stabilise in the coming years
  • Recruitment of mid-career professionals to complement
  • MOH will replace the Private Hospitals and Medical Clinics Act (PHMCA) with the Healthcare Services (HCS) Bill; new licensing approach to accommodate various care models
Other developments

- Shift to encourage generalist training [as compared to specialist] to accommodate shifting population profile [aging population, chronic and multiple diseases]
- Diet
  - Healthier choice label for various food categories [e.g. brown rice, less sugar]
  - Scheme has been expanded recently to encourage at least 1 healthier choice item on food menu for participating hawker outlets [Healthier Dining Programme]
- Healthy living
  - National Steps Challenge [exercise bands issued free to all participants]
  - Incentives e.g. shopping/grocery vouchers for reaching certain steps targets
  - https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/37/nsc
- Poverty/inequality
  - Scrutiny/spotlight on poverty recently
  - Realisation that existing measures may not be adequate for widening inequality gap in Singapore
SMA’s inputs

• SMA has been supportive of the transformation measures, e.g. MOH shift from specialist to generalist
• SMA Charity Fund [independent charity arm of SMA] has been supporting needy medical students, providing bursaries for living expenses; bursary amount has been increased to factor for inflation
• It is encouraging that Ministry of Health and Singapore Medical Council have been more consultative when deliberating on policy changes, inviting SMA for comments on potential changes
Next steps / Conclusion

• Path to wellness a long term endeavour
• Getting patient buy-in also important [e.g. personal responsibility for own health]
• Shift to holistic approach should not mean neglecting the fundamentals of medicine, i.e. autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence
• Also, doctors can only practice holistically, if the environment and working conditions are conducive [e.g. patient waiting time, hospital bed occupancy rates, etc.]