

## Evolution of Healthcare to a Business Model

Many of us in Outram campus who have been doctors, nurses or paramedical healthcare providers in the days when SGH was first “privatised” will remember the angst of coming to grips with medicine changing from a social obligation to a “business” entity. The patient-centric focus, where healthcare providers only wanted the best for their patients, regardless of cost, has changed to a focus on the bottom-line. Terms that used to be familiar only to managers and administrators, like “cost-effectiveness”, “subvention”, “revenue capping”, and “P&L”, are now becoming commonplace language for the lay healthcare giver.

Because of the greater push for regionalisation, and also the realisation that our once hallowed place as the best in healthcare in the region is being rapidly eroded by the likes of Thailand and Malaysia, we do indeed need to be familiar with the “business” side of medicine. Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Acting Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports and Senior Minister of State (Trade and Industry), and former chief executive officer of SGH touched on some critical observations regarding this in his 11th SGH Lecture on “Medicine and the Marketplace”.<sup>1</sup> Several misconceptions are addressed in this transcript and some of these like “price is related directly to cost”, “underpaying staff reduces medical care costs”, and “everyone can be an excellent clinician, researcher and

teacher” should be especially pertinent to us and make for worthwhile reading and reflection.

Also, in line with the move for us to embrace the branding and marketing of Singapore Medicine, we need to ensure that we are ready for the international playing field, not just in clinical medicine but also in advancing our reputation as a leader in clinical trials and biomedical research. It is therefore pertinent that in this issue of the *SGH Proceedings*, there are two well-written articles that address some important aspects of our current practice that we oftentimes take for granted or are not completely conversant with. These two articles on “The Patient’s Consent” and also the ethics of “Human Tissue Research and Clinical Practice” should make for an important read.<sup>2,3</sup>

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### REFERENCES

1. Balakrishnan V. Medicine and the marketplace. *SGH Proceedings* 2004; 13:73-5.
2. Bobrow M. The patient’s consent. *SGH Proceedings* 2004; 13:82-7.
3. Kandiah D. Human tissue research and clinical practice. *SGH Proceedings* 2004; 13:88-91.