

# SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony

23 September 2023



The SMC held its second Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony this year on 23 September.

The event, which was held at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore, saw 526 provisionally- and conditionally-registered doctors taking the Pledge.

By taking the Physician's oath, doctors were reminded of their responsibilities to their patients as well as the importance of upholding high professional and ethical standards in their practice.

During the Ceremony, 10 doctors who successfully completed their Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) training in 2022 received the MOH National Outstanding PGY1 Award.

These recipients had demonstrated consistent outstanding performance throughout their PGY1 training and displayed exemplary attributes of a doctor such as leadership and professionalism.

The SMC was honoured to have Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health as the Guest-of-Honour for the event, as well as members of the Medical Council and invited guests from the medical professional bodies and Chairmen of Medical Boards of hospitals.

## Speech by Guest of Honour Mr Masagos Zulkifli

Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health

I am pleased to join you for this afternoon's Ceremony. We are gathered today to mark a significant milestone in your journey as doctors, as you take the Singapore Medical Council Physician's Pledge.

We come together and witness each solemn commitment to uphold the values that are core to the medical profession - dedication, integrity, and respect.

Many members of the profession, who are here with us today, displayed these values during our fight against COVID-19.

It was not easy, but they displayed professionalism, dedication, and grit. To these doctors, thank you for keeping Singapore and Singaporeans safe.

Before the taking of the pledge, I would like to share a few thoughts.

First, be dedicated in serving your patients, doing what it takes to support their health.

This means being adaptable and responding to the needs of our population. As many of you already know, Singapore is a rapidly ageing society.



By 2026, one in five Singaporeans will be aged 65 and above. In addition, like many developed countries, there is a rising prevalence of chronic diseases.

Therefore, we must not only be equipped to put out fires, we must also prevent fires from occurring in the first place.

This is why as a nation, we are shifting our focus from curative care to preventive health, through Healthier SG.

As medical professionals, each of you play an important role in HealthierSG.

Whichever career pathway you choose to take, whether you are a family physician in the primary care sector, a hospital clinician, or a specialist.

HealthierSG is a national strategy to transform our healthcare system but more importantly, it is a shift in our ways of seeing and practicing healthcare.

Second, constantly strive to add to your knowledge and skill, and pursue excellence.

While many of you have gone through the rigor of a medical programme, never stop learning. The demographics and needs of society are changing.

The medical fields you are in are constantly evolving. Pursue continuing medical education meaningfully, and it will help you keep abreast of the latest knowledge and inform your practice.



I am glad that professional bodies like the Singapore Medical Association, College of Family Physicians Singapore and the Academy of Medicine Singapore are providing courses for CME, and also continue to foster knowledge sharing and opportunities for collaboration.

More than a decade ago, we introduced structured postgraduate medical training through residency programmes.

***The trust that you build with your patients enables you to partner with them to improve their health and well-being. Never take this trust for granted. Strive towards excellence, serve your patients with care, and uphold high standards of professional practice and conduct.***

These programmes have undoubtedly borne fruit, equipping our system with a structure to train doctors, and enriching our doctors with invaluable knowledge and clinical expertise.

To sustain the quality of postgraduate medical education in Singapore, we have developed our very own accreditation framework to accredit postgraduate medical training programmes.

Together with the development of local standards, these moves will further contextualise clinical training and ensure that postgraduate medical training programmes meets our high standards, training doctors to deliver quality healthcare for Singaporeans.

I'm pleased to announce the establishment of this framework, which is called the Accreditation of Postgraduate Medical Education Singapore or APMES.

As we transition to APMES, we are also introducing competency-based medical education through the implementation of Entrustable Professional Activities or EPAs. These EPAs provide clear definitions of competencies that medical professionals must achieve at different stages of their training and the corresponding assessments are carefully selected for alignment to training outcomes.



The aim is to foster a more learner-centred environment and facilitate timely feedback, ultimately supporting the development of trainees into stronger family physicians, hospital clinicians, and specialists.

Third, uphold your professionalism and integrity. The practice of medicine is not solely about acquiring knowledge and skills. It also carries a profound responsibility of ethical and responsible practice.

The trust that you build with your patients enables you to partner with them to improve their health and well-being. Never take this trust for granted. Strive towards excellence, serve your patients with care, and uphold high standards of professional practice and conduct. The SMC Ethical Code and Guidelines are and will continue to be your guide.

We will continue to support doctors in the meting out your duties with integrity. For instance, for the issue of informed consent, we convened a Workgroup to discuss the issue, and implemented its recommendations. One such recommendation was the establishment of clear legal standard on the duty to counsel, one which is both patient-centric and informed by the opinion of a responsible body of doctors. Allowing for shared decision making while maintaining trust between patients and physicians.



To better support doctors, SMC will be introducing a mandatory CME course in medical ethics from January 2024. Through the introduction of this course, we hope to support every doctor in handling ethical issues and dilemmas you may face in the course of your work, with confidence and assurance.

### **The Pledge as Your Compass**

Come what may in your journey ahead, the fundamental values hold true – dedication, integrity, and respect – values that are found in the Physician's Pledge. Your commitment to uphold these values will impact you and your practice, and the well-being and lives of your patients.

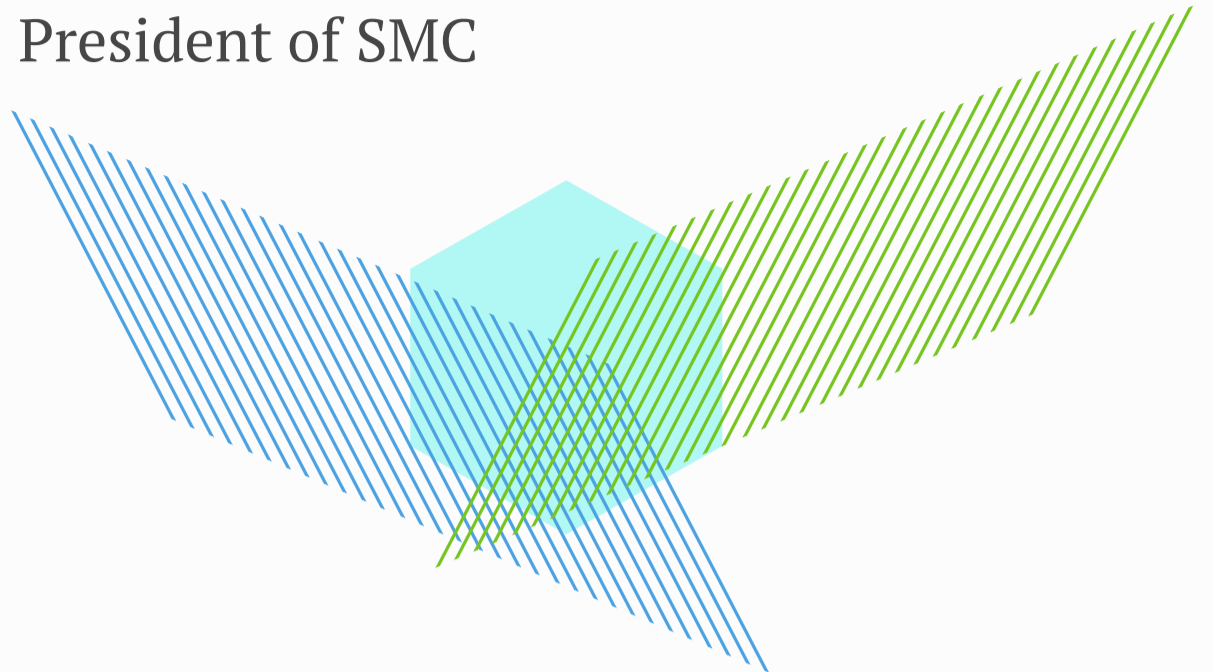
May the solemn promises you make today be a steady compass guiding you in your career. I wish you the very best in your journey ahead.

Thank you.



## Speech by Professor Chee Yam Cheng

President of SMC



On behalf of the Singapore Medical Council, I warmly welcome and thank Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Second Minister for Health and all our guests for joining the Council this afternoon to witness our younger colleagues take the Physician's Pledge.

We have more than 500 doctors today who are taking the Pledge.

The Pledge is not just a mere formal recitation, it is a solemn promise or undertaking by every doctor before he can be fully registered to practise independently. This is required by the Medical Registration Act.

The Pledge encapsulates the ethical values doctors are expected to hold professionally at all times. Since 1995, every doctor has taken the Pledge before he or she can be admitted as a fully registered practitioner.

### The Physician's Pledge

The Physician's Pledge is based on the Declaration of Geneva and reflects the ethical values in the SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (or ECEG for short).

In the first sentence, you solemnly pledge to dedicate your life to the service of humanity. This is your mission, the reason why you spent many years to study and learn medicine.

All the parts of the Pledge are linked to the mission: to dedicate your life to the service of humanity.

You have studied and worked hard since your primary and secondary school days, college and university to arrive at this day.

But all your good work can be diminished or even destroyed by indiscretion, unethical professional behaviour, dishonesty and lack of integrity.



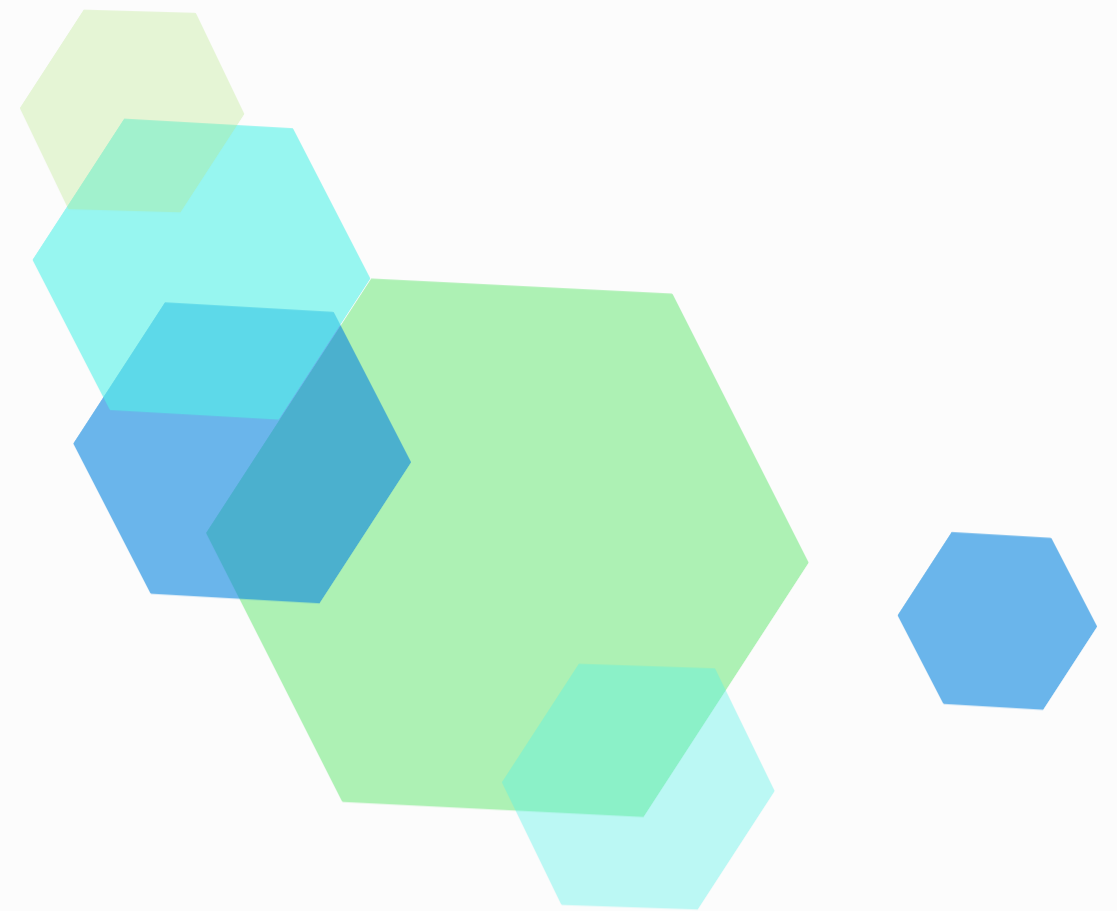
We remind ourselves that it is not only for our patients, it is for ourselves that we constantly take heed to the SMC's ECEG.

Even as you progress in your career or continue to study as postgraduate doctors, training to be family physicians and specialists, all the more you must remember the responsibilities that were vested on you as a professional.

There are no clearer examples than the medically related disciplinary cases. Your patients depend and rely on you.

Many examples of disciplinary cases involving doctors continue to be published in SMC's Annual Reports and the media.

The medical education you received has therefore rightly put clear emphasis on ethics and professionalism. The SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines, as well as the SMC Handbook on Medical Ethics are freely available for our reference and guidance.



### **Compulsory CME on Medical Ethics for doctors**

To ensure that doctors are familiar with and up-to-date on ethical issues and best practices, Continuing Medical Education (CME) on Medical Ethics will be made mandatory for doctors as recommended by the MOH Workgroup which reviewed the taking of Informed Consent and SMC Disciplinary Process sometime ago.

*All the parts of the Pledge are linked to the mission: to dedicate your life to the service of humanity.*

Let me quote from Recommendation 10 of the Workgroup's Report. "Currently, there is a low take-up rate for medical education on medical ethics for the general population of doctors as such courses are not compulsory.

Core points for CME are only awarded for clinical updates within the specialty. There is a need to increase awareness of ethical issues and developments, such as informed consent, throughout the medical profession, as these developments can have a significant impact on the practice of medicine.

Mandating that doctors update themselves on these issues will ensure that they are exposed to baseline level of knowledge on the applicable legal standards in practice that will allow them to practice effectively."

The Mandatory Medical Ethics component in the SMC CME requirements will start from the Practising Certificate (or PC) qualifying period from 2024 (next year).

From then on, all registered doctors must obtain the minimum Medical Ethics CME core points before they can renew their PCs from the year 2026.

The Council is grateful to have the partnership of the three medical professional bodies, namely, the Academy of Medicine Singapore, College of Family Physicians Singapore and Singapore Medical Association which have developed the Medical Ethics curriculum.

The curriculum will be progressively rolled out and will cover four fundamental core topics:

- i. Professionalism;
- ii. Ethics;
- iii. Informed Consent and Medical Decision Making; and
- iv. Medical Records, Privacy and Confidentiality.

The details of the requirements have been circulated to all doctors via an SMC Circular on 11 May this year, and published in the SMC newsletters in November 2022 and July 2023. If this is new to you, I urge you to find the Circular and read the SMC newsletters on the SMC website.



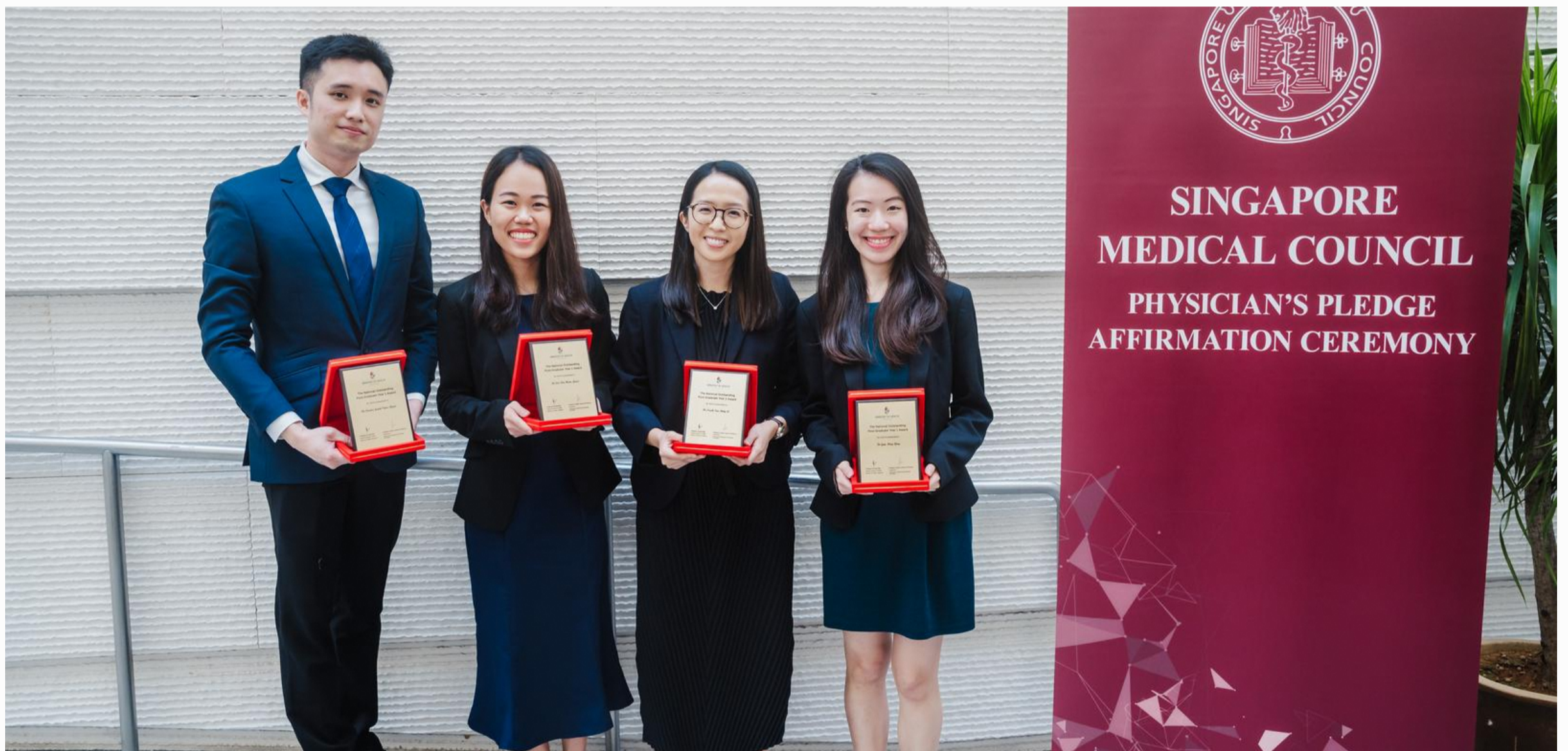


## National Outstanding Postgraduate Year 1 Award

Many of you here are currently in your Postgraduate Year 1 or PGY1 and would agree that this is a demanding period of training.

I am pleased to inform you that MOH is resuming the presentation of the National Outstanding PGY1 Award in the SMC Pledge Ceremony in September.

This annual award by the Ministry of Health began in 2017 to recognise the PGY1 medical graduates who had consistently demonstrated excellence in the PGY1 training programme. Today, MOH will be presenting the awards to 10 such doctors from the 2022 cohort who have demonstrated exemplary performance, exceptional leadership, interpersonal and clinical skills in the various postings throughout their 12-month training.



## Conclusion

In closing, I congratulate you on your achievements as you start your medical career. If you face difficult situations and ethical dilemmas, let the Physician's Pledge serve as your compass. Practise within the guidelines stated in the ECEG, and uphold the trust and confidence placed upon you by your patients, profession, and society. On behalf of the Council, I wish you all a fruitful and fulfilling medical career ahead.

Thank you.