

SMC Newsletter



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“ SMC has a commitment to ensure that doctors maintain ethical medical practice and professional development...” ”

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SMC President's Message

Dear Colleagues

Since 2022, we have been communicating to all doctors on the new requirements of Mandatory Medical Ethics (MME) CME core points for Practising Certificate (PC) renewals from 2026 onwards. I would like to remind doctors whose PCs are expiring at the end of this year to fulfil their required MME CME core points.

SMC has a commitment to ensure that doctors maintain ethical medical practice and professional development which are also embodied in the Physician's Pledge. Recently on 1 March 2025, the Medical Council witnessed 231 doctors taking the Physician's Pledge at the SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony. We thank our Guest-of-Honour, Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, Minister of State for Health, for joining us at this important occasion.

In her address, Mdm Rahayu highlighted the challenges and opportunities facing our medical community. She spoke about several improvements which have been made to support doctors, including the implementation of the National Wellness Committee's recommendations for junior doctors, appointment of Chief Wellness Officers in healthcare clusters, and the introduction of the Tripartite Framework for Prevention of Abuse and Harassment of Healthcare Workers in December 2023. These improvements reflect a collaborative effort involving policymakers, healthcare institutions, and doctors on the ground.



...we must remember that our care must always be in the best interest of our patients, partnering with our patients in shared decision-making to achieve patient-centric care. ”

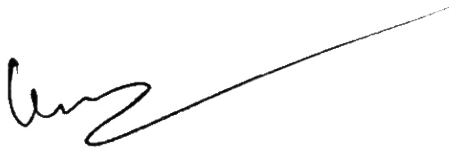
As we address the healthcare needs of our ageing population and the rising number of patients with chronic health conditions, we must remember that our care must always be in the best interest of our patients, partnering with our patients in shared decision-making to achieve patient-centric care.

 **It is for us as members of our profession to enable and to support professional self-regulation which has the trust of the public.** 

In the months ahead, the SMC will be conducting its election of elected Council members whose terms are ending this year. We will call for nominations and we hope that exemplary and worthy members of the medical profession will step forward to be nominated.

It is mandatory for all fully registered doctors who are residing in Singapore to vote. To ensure you receive timely updates about the SMC election and other important matters, you must verify and update your contact details in the Professional Registration System if there are changes. It is for us as members of our profession to enable and to support professional self-regulation which has the trust of the public.

Thank you.



Professor Chee Yam Cheng
President

SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony, 1 March 2025

The first SMC Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony this year was held on Saturday, 1 March 2025. The ceremony took place at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore.





231 doctors who were mainly conditionally-registered doctors took the Pledge, reminding themselves and one another of their responsibilities to their patients as well as the importance of upholding high professional and ethical standards.



Minister of State for Health, Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, was the Guest-of-Honour for the ceremony. Guests invited included representatives of the medical professional bodies and Medical Boards of healthcare institutions.



IMPORTANT NOTE:
**CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ATTENDING THE PLEDGE
CEREMONY FOR PROVISIONALLY REGISTERED DOCTORS**

Under the Medical Registration Regulations 2010, section 16(1), attending the SMC Physician's Affirmation Pledge Ceremony and taking the Pledge is one of the requirements that all doctors must fulfil to be eligible for consideration for Full Registration (F-reg).

Graduates from the three local medical schools who are provisionally registered (P-reg) must take the Pledge before the completion of their Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) training.

P-reg doctors who fail to attend the Pledge Ceremony will not be able to progress to F-reg. Instead, he/she will be placed under [Temporary Registration \(T-reg\)](#) after successful completion of PGY1 training to continue with his/her clinical practice. Under T-reg, the doctor will only be allowed to work in an SMC-approved institution and be assessed under supervision for each posting. The doctor may apply for F-reg only after he/she has taken the Pledge and fulfilled all prevailing requirements including obtaining consistent satisfactory performance rating as assessed by their SMC-approved supervisors.

Speech by Minister of State for Health, Mdm Rahayu Mahzam



Professor Chee Yam Cheng, President of the Singapore Medical Council,
Council Members,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

I am pleased to join you this afternoon for the Singapore Medical Council Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony. Today marks a pivotal milestone in your career as doctors. The oath that you are about to undertake affirms your commitment to dedicate your life to the service of humanity and to practise your profession with conscience and resolute dignity.

Progress and Opportunities

Many of you present today would have practised for some time in our public hospitals and perhaps some of you have witnessed firsthand the changes in our healthcare system. Some of these changes are a result of national-level initiatives, such as the National Wellness Committee for Junior Doctors, which focused on improving junior doctors' well-being. The committee's recommendations are being implemented progressively. These include establishing clearer work hour guidelines, strengthening staff support structures, and improving career pathways and guidance for junior doctors.

We recognise that all of you have different goals and career ambitions. With this in mind, we have developed various career pathways while meeting the healthcare needs of Singaporeans. Whether you choose to anchor primary and community care as Family Physicians, lead broad-based hospital care as Hospital Clinicians or develop deep

expertise as specialists, there is a place for each one of you to make a meaningful difference in the public healthcare system. Clusters hold 'Career Days' where you can find out more about what each role entails. You can also find out more about the various career pathways from MOHH's and clusters' websites.



To place more focus on improving the well-being of our healthcare workforce, Chief Wellness Officers have been appointed in the public healthcare clusters to oversee well-being initiatives. All clusters have introduced psychological support resources and feedback mechanisms, ensuring staff can safely voice concerns and receive updates on actions taken. We have also introduced the Tripartite Framework for the Prevention of Abuse and Harassment of Healthcare Workers in December 2023.

the public healthcare institutions have been strengthening their processes to implement a standardised zero-tolerance policy against the abuse and harassment of healthcare workers in any form.

Since then, the public healthcare institutions have been strengthening their processes to implement a standardised zero-tolerance policy against the abuse and harassment of healthcare workers in any form. This includes providing avenues for healthcare workers to report incidents of abuse and harassment and putting in place measures to better support those who have been subject to abuse and harassment. Clusters are also progressively training their staff to better recognise and de-escalate potential incidents of abuse and harassment.

These significant improvements are the result of a concerted effort involving multiple stakeholders: from policymakers and staff at the Ministry and MOHH, to leaders in healthcare institutions, and crucially, the doctors on the ground who have courageously provided invaluable feedback. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in enhancing the system in which you work.

Minimising Care Fragmentation in an Ageing Population

While we have made some progress, the demands of a doctor remain high. With our ageing population, there will be a greater number of elderly patients presenting with multiple co-morbidities and frailty. This presents an opportunity for all of us to evolve our approach to patient care. While specialisation is still relevant in today's clinical practice, there is also value in maintaining a broad scope of practice, particularly when caring for patients with chronic conditions and multiple co-morbidities. We encourage you to consider how you might adapt your practice to respond effectively to these changing care needs.

At the national level, we have launched several initiatives including Healthier SG and Age Well SG, to help keep our population healthy, prepare for an ageing society, and anchor care in the community. With Healthier SG, residents will enrol with and be cared for by their family doctor. Doctors will engage residents and co-develop a personalised Health Plan with health goals and actions to help residents proactively manage their health. With Age Well SG, we are making further moves to weave together social and health services in local communities around our seniors, to proactively care for their needs and pre-empt social isolation and decline.

Central to this is our Active Ageing Centres (AACs), which serve as key nodes for seniors to remain socially engaged and physically active. In addition, our healthcare clusters run Community Health Posts, many of which are co-located or in close proximity to AACs, where seniors can approach community nurses for medical and health services.



delivering care that is not just clinically effective but also cost-effective. As doctors, you are entrusted not only with delivering appropriate and evidence-based care but also partnering with patients in shared decision-making to achieve patient-centric care

These services include Geriatric Assessment, Lifestyle Coaching, and Medication Management. For those of you who will be working in hospital settings, familiarising yourself with these community resources can help smoothen your patients' transition home and anchor their care within the community. Ultimately, however, there is more to know, and more to do for each patient.

Back to Basics: Patient-Centric Care

Our ageing population also brings with it other challenges: we are seeing a rise in chronic diseases lead to greater utilisation of healthcare services. Meanwhile, we have made advances in technologies and innovation, including diagnostic tools and treatment methods, but many of these have come at significant costs. Where such newer technologies are available, countries have found that doctors may offer them to patients in hopes of improved outcomes, or where concerns about defensive medicine loom and patients request these tests and interventions, even when patients' outcomes remain the same. This has resulted in increased costs for our patients and healthcare system, even when it is unclear that patients' outcomes improve.

It is therefore important for us to go back to the basics in our care of patients: our care must be in the best interest of our patients. This means delivering care that is not just clinically effective but also cost-effective. As doctors, you are entrusted not

only with delivering appropriate and evidence-based care but also partnering with patients in shared decision-making to achieve patient-centric care, while serving as prudent stewards of healthcare resources – identifying treatment outcomes that matter to them while being mindful that unnecessary tests or treatments may burden them without adding value to their care.



This is where our Value-Driven Care (VDC) initiatives play a crucial role in Singapore's ongoing efforts to enhance care quality while ensuring sustainability. It allows us to identify areas where clinical practice, processes or resource utilisation vary from established standards. This occurs at every level of care delivery – from individual doctors to hospitals, and even nationally. By tackling these variations at each level, we have the opportunity to consistently deliver appropriate care regardless of the clinical setting while minimising unnecessary costs to patients. We have already conducted a VDC review across 18 clinical conditions, involving our healthcare clusters. But the real change begins with you, in your daily practice. Let every decision you make put your patient as your first consideration.



Maintaining High Standards of Professionalism

Even as care needs shift, your commitment to exemplary professional standards and ethical behaviour must never waver. You must remain vigilant in upholding the quality and standard of care as outlined in the SMC's Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines. The challenges that you face during your career may tempt you to compromise your care for your patients. It is in such a climate – in the midst of challenges – that it becomes more difficult, yet all the more necessary for you to affirm the heart of the Physician's Pledge.

In 2022, SMC introduced the Mandatory Medical Ethics (MME) Continuing Medical Education (CME) core points requirement as a prerequisite for doctors renewing their Practising Certificate from 2026 onwards, as mentioned by Professor Chee Yam Cheng earlier in his speech. We hope that the Medical Ethics educational activities serve as a platform for senior doctors to share their experiences, and for you to understand that the issues surrounding medical ethics and practice are not yours alone. Every generation of doctors practises in a landscape that evolves over time, but the values that the Physician's Pledge upholds have remained steadfast.

In closing, I urge you to reflect upon the words in the Physician's Pledge as you recite it later. Congratulations for reaching this significant milestone and may you have a successful and fulfilling career ahead.

Thank you.





Speech by Professor Chee Yam Cheng, President of SMC

Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, Minister of State for Health,
Fellow Council Members,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Singapore Medical Council, a warm welcome to all of you gathered here for the first Physician's Pledge Affirmation Ceremony in 2025. We welcome our Guest-of-Honour, Minister of State for Health, Mdm Rahayu Mahzam and we are indeed happy that she can join us again for this Pledge. The Pledge as you know and realise by now is a significant milestone in your career. Firstly, a reminder of your professional and ethical obligations, and secondly, a requirement in the Medical Registration Regulations for full registration.

The Significance of the Physician's Pledge

The Physician's Pledge is no mere ceremony. It is in fact the solemn lifelong promises that you make before the Council in public concerning your medical practice. The Pledge mirrors the set of ethical values contained in the Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines of the Singapore Medical Council that each doctor in Singapore is expected to uphold professionally at all times. Since 1995, every doctor upon being admitted as a fully registered practitioner with the SMC has had to make this Pledge.

Ethics and Professionalism: The Foundation of Medical Practice

Integrity, ethics, and professionalism form the cornerstone of our profession. The SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines, or ECEG in short, serves as our compass in conduct and practice. The introduction and preamble to the ECEG states, "As a member of the medical profession you are held in the highest esteem by the public and society, who depend on a reliable and trustworthy healthcare system and look to you for the relief of their suffering and ailments." This trust is continuously maintained through ethical practice and professional excellence, and through the jurisdiction of the SMC in relation to the professional conduct of doctors.

 **Integrity, ethics, and professionalism form the cornerstone of our profession.** 

Current State of Medical Practice

In 2023, the Medical Council received 88 complaints against 100 medical practitioners, a relatively small number considering our register of more than 17,000 doctors. In recent months, professional conduct in telemedicine services had been in the spotlight. Technology comes with new convenient and important tools but the ethics of a doctor does not change with technology. A virtual consultation should be done with even more care as the patient is not physically in your clinic. There are limitations to a teleconsultation and a proper history taking with appropriate advice thereafter is imperative. Since it is not possible to do a proper physical examination, one must be aware of the type of conditions which can be safely and ethically consulted via a teleconsultation.

 **We must guard against the pitfalls of avarice with technological ease and convenience.** 

We must guard against the pitfalls of avarice with technological ease and convenience. Telemedicine must be conducted appropriately, and your management of patients must be professionally and ethically sound.

I would encourage all of you to read the disciplinary cases published on the SMC website. These cases offer invaluable insights

into the pitfalls of medical practice and are important reminders of our professional obligations. The SMC still encounters problems of overprescription of addictive drugs like opiates and benzodiazepines. Communication issues, negligence and incompetence are other common reasons for discipline.



While some of these unfortunately arose from greed, there could be other reasons like indifference, lack of knowledge, failure to keep up with professional competencies, a lack of compassion or a failure to communicate appropriately with the patient and the family members.

Professionalism extends beyond a doctor's technical expertise and includes an attitude of care and concern for the patient and

working closely with fellow colleagues with mutual respect and collegiality. Being responsible and having due respect for others matter. For example, turning up on time for clinics, appointments, and meetings and not being absent without advance notice are important in our work ethic.

Our profession carries the responsibility of patients entrusting us with their well-being and lives; we have a duty of care. This trust demands our commitment to always provide healthcare that is in the best interest of the patient, with care and compassion in our communications and proper informed consent where indicated. Besides medical knowledge and skills, communication is part of our training as doctors.

Mandatory Medical Ethics Education

To ensure continued excellence in ethical practice, the Council has implemented mandatory Continuing Medical Education on Medical Ethics for all doctors. This initiative, recommended by the MOH Workgroup, addresses the importance of a continuing medical ethics education. Starting from 2026, doctors must obtain a minimum number of Mandatory Medical Ethics core points to renew their practising certificates.

The curriculum, developed in partnership with key medical professional bodies, covers four fundamental areas:

- a) Professionalism
- b) Ethics
- c) Informed Consent and Medical Decision Making
- d) Medical Records, Privacy and Confidentiality

The details of the MME CME requirements can be found on the SMC website which you should visit and familiarise yourself with.

Ongoing Professional Development

The Council maintains regular communication through newsletters and announcements on the SMC website to provide updates and educational content on professional ethics. These include case studies, guidelines and circulars. I encourage you to keep abreast with the current news or announcements which could prove crucial to your practice.

A Call to Excellence

As you continue your medical career, there will be times of difficulty, stress, anxiety, and hard work. However, if we dedicate our life to the service of humanity, to practise with conscience and dignity, and make our patients' health our first consideration, there will also be satisfaction, fulfilment and joy in our work and profession. May each of us continue to aspire to such standards of ethical, compassionate, and professional care.

Thank you.



SMC Election 2025

The Singapore Medical Council (SMC) will be holding an election this year. More details will be shared closer to the election date.

What you need to know:

- **All fully registered doctors residing in Singapore with a valid Practising Certificate (PC) must vote.**
- Doctors who fail to vote will not be entitled to apply for a PC unless they:
 - Satisfy the Registrar that they had a good and sufficient reason for not voting at the election; or
 - Pay a penalty of \$500 to the SMC

Important action required:

- SMC will communicate election information to eligible doctors via email and website announcements.
- **Update your particulars and contact details** via the [Professional Registration System](#) to receive timely alerts, notifications, and information from the SMC.



Reminder on Mandatory Medical Ethics (MME) Core Points Fulfilment for Practising Certificate (PC) Expiring on 31 Dec 2025

The Singapore Medical Council (SMC) had in its Circulars issued on [11 May 2023](#) and [31 January 2024](#), informed registered doctors that they must acquire Mandatory Medical Ethics (MME) CME core points before they can renew their PCs from 2026 onwards. Doctors who have renewed their PCs when it expired on 31 December 2024 would need to start acquiring the points from 1 January 2025.

Required MME Core Points

For doctors who renew their PCs biennially, 5 MME Core points are required, while those who wish to renew annually need 3 MME Core points. To illustrate, please refer to Table 1 below:

PC renewal application for 1-year and 2-year PCs	CME Qualifying Period (QP)	MME CME Core points required
PCs expiring on 31 Dec 2025	1 Jan 2024 to 31 Dec 2025	5 (2-year PC)
	1 Jan 2025 to 31 Dec 2025	3 (1-year PC)
PCs expiring on 31 Dec 2026	1 Jan 2025 to 31 Dec 2026	5 (2-year PC)
	1 Jan 2026 to 31 Dec 2026	3 (1-year PC)

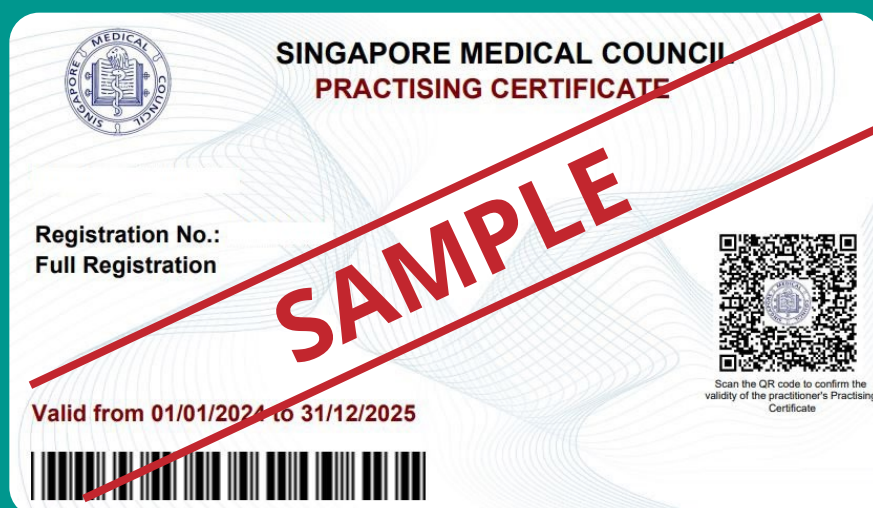
Table 1: MME Core Points Requirements

MME CME Providers

The MME* programmes and activities are conducted by the current MME CME Providers from the three medical Professional Bodies (PBs), i.e. the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AMS), College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS) and Singapore Medical Association (SMA).

Doctors can find Medical Ethics events conducted by these CME providers on the SMC's website under '[CPE Medical Ethics Events Search](#)'. MME CME providers will submit claims for doctors, hence doctors are not required to submit self-claims for these MME CME activities.

For more information, doctors may refer to the Frequently Asked Question, '[Mandatory Medical Ethics CME](#)' section, on SMC's website.



*Only Medical Ethics programmes and activities conducted by the three medical PBs will be awarded Medical Ethics core points. Medical Ethics programmes conducted by other CME Providers (if approved) will be accredited as non-core CME points.



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