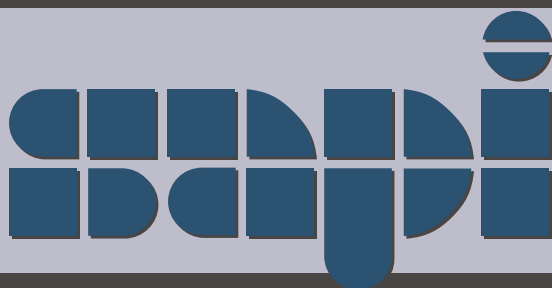


January 2001



NEWS

Newsletter of Singapore Association of Pharmaceutical Industries

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# Focus on

R & D

## Survey Finds 103 New AIDS Medicines in the Pipeline

Pharmaceutical companies are working on the next generation of medicines for AIDS, while continuing to improve existing treatments. That's the finding of a new survey by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) released just days before World AIDS Day on December 1.



The survey found 103 medicines in testing that may bolster the current arsenal of 64 approved medicines. A total of 73 companies, plus the National Institutes of Health, are conducting the research. All of the medicines are either in clinical trials or awaiting approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

"The 103 medicines in development underline the continuing and relentless efforts by the pharmaceutical industry to combat AIDS," said PhRMA President Alan F. Holmer. "Only three years after the AIDS virus was identified, a pharmaceutical company made the first medicine for this disease available. Since combination drug therapy with protease inhibitors was introduced in the mid-1990s, the U.S. death rate from AIDS has dropped about 80 percent. Now, companies are opening new fronts in the war against AIDS."

Vaccines, drugs that inhibit the virus from entering a patient's cells, and new ways to boost the body's immune system are examples of some of these new approaches. Thirteen vaccines are in development, including one currently in Phase III clinical trials expected to conclude in 2002.

In addition to the new approaches, companies are also working on new versions of medicines that have already proven effective against AIDS for many patients. For example, one company is testing the first in a new class of protease inhibitors with a different structure than currently available protease inhibitors. Tests suggest that the new drug is active against strains of the virus resistant to existing medicines.

Opportunistic infections and other AIDS-related conditions are also targets of company research. The survey found 22 medicines in development for AIDS-related cancers, 7 for fungal infections and several to treat AIDS-related pneumonia and diarrhea and to manage severe pain.

"Despite the remarkable progress against AIDS, the disease is far from beaten," said Holmer. "Worldwide, an estimated 33 million adults and 1.3 million children are living with HIV or AIDS, and AIDS is the fifth leading killer of people ages 25 to 44 in the United States. Pharmaceutical companies are committed to continuing the fight against AIDS and to finding new ways to thwart this terrible disease."

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) represents the country's leading research-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, which are devoted to inventing medicines that allow patients to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives. Investing more than \$26 billion in 2000 in discovering and developing new medicines, PhRMA companies are leading the way in the search for new cures.

# SAPI'S

## Hypnosis, anyone?

D & D

It was a night to remember, or not, for at least ten of the guests at the Singapore Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (SAPI) 34th Annual Dinner & Dance. The party was held on Friday, 27 October 2000 at the Regent Hotel.



Michael Khor welcoming our Guest of Honour, Prof. Tan Chorh Chuan.

The highlight of the night was the rare performance by a famous stage hypnotist from New Zealand. Ten "willing" guests volunteered themselves to be hypnotised for the moment.

When people think of hypnosis, most of them remember stage shows or movies they have seen, and the silly, or bad, things that happened to those people who were hypnotised. In the case of stage hypnosis, however, the goal was entertainment. It sure entertained the whole ballroom that night.

The volunteers allowed themselves to go along with the suggestions of the stage hypnotist for the fun of it, not just because they trusted the hypnotist, but to entertain the crowd.

The crowd witnessed an Elvis in-the-making, the Wonderful Orchestra and not forgetting, the Strongest Man in Singapore. By the way, none of them were really sure if the hypnosis was for real. What do you think?

In his speech, Prof. Tan Chorh Chuan, Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health, highlighted significant developments in healthcare management (please refer to his speech in this newsletter). These

developments will no doubt present the pharmaceutical industry with new opportunities and challenges.

Mr. Michael Khor, Vice President of SAPI, took the opportunity to highlight the main events of the past year – participation in discussions with MOH, and formation of a new committee in response to local needs, among others.

While enjoying the sumptuous Chinese dinner, guests witnessed a special entertainment by the delightful youths from MINDS. To show their appreciation, guests donated generously for the good cause.

It was indeed an enjoyable evening for the rest of the guests who did not get the chance to be hypnotised. Games of Oldies and Bingo not only worked the crowd, but they showed the best of teamwork and most importantly, Good Ol' Fun.

It was heartening to see the whole ballroom full of people, stayed until the end. It was a time to see old friends, and make new ones.



A four-piece-band? Volunteers were hypnotised on stage.

As the guests made their way home, memories of good time will linger. Some through the hypnotic experience others through prizes won and new found friends.

Well, we hope to see everyone, and more, next year!

# 34th Annual Dinner & Dance

27 October 2000

Speech

Speech by Guest of Honour Prof. Tan Chorh Chuan  
Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health



Prof. Tan Chorh Chuan speaking at the Dinner & Dance

I am happy to join all of you this evening for the 34th Annual Dinner and Dance of your association. I welcome this opportunity to share with you a number of significant developments that have taken place over the last few months. Some of these developments will no doubt present the pharmaceutical industry, one of the key players in our healthcare system, with new opportunities and challenges.

## ***Recent Developments in the Public Health Sector***

The year 2000 has certainly been an important year of change so far for Singapore's public healthcare system. At the end of 1999, the Ministry of Health announced that the public healthcare delivery system would be reorganized into two clusters to provide more integrated and holistic healthcare for Singaporeans. Each cluster - comprising regional and tertiary hospitals, specialist centres and primary health polyclinics - would be able to provide a full range of health services from primary through secondary to

tertiary care. There would also be greater collaboration and cooperation among the institutions to share expertise and resources.

The two clusters, the National Healthcare Group and Singapore Health Services, became fully operational from the first of this month. For those of you in the pharmaceutical industry, you might wonder how this development would impact on the supply and management of drugs in the public health sector.

While the two clusters function autonomously in their operations and management, in the area of drug supply, a Group Purchasing Office has been established to facilitate the continued central procurement of medicinal products to meet the pharmaceutical needs of both clusters. This has taken over the National Pharmaceutical Administration's procurement functions, and serves to ensure that there will be a measure of continuity in bulk purchasing of drugs for the hospitals and polyclinics. At the national policy level, the Ministry of Health will continue to play the key role in ensuring the optimal and cost effective use of medicinal products in the public health sector. The Ministry will also continue to track drug usage trends closely, especially for expensive drugs. This is to ensure that the national drug expenditure in the public health sector remains at an affordable level in relation to the total healthcare expenditure.

Although the tenders for pharmaceuticals will now be processed by the Group Purchasing Office of the new clusters, I would like to urge all pharmaceutical companies to continue to offer your products at the best affordable prices. From an in-house survey conducted last year by the National Pharmaceutical Administration, we noted that the prices of proprietary products in Singapore are generally higher than Malaysia and Australia. SAPI might therefore wish to consider looking into this area to assess what are

the factors that contribute to higher drug prices in Singapore and look at ways to make our local drug prices more competitive, so that the cost of healthcare in Singapore does not get driven up unnecessarily. This is an important and useful contribution that SAPI can make to help prevent the escalation of healthcare costs.



Elvis Presley in the making during the hypnosis show

## ***New Primary Healthcare Initiatives***

Let me now update you on some new initiatives in primary healthcare prevention. From 1 Oct this year, the Ministry of Health has launched two new medical schemes to upgrade the level of primary care to needy and elderly patients. The three Comprehensive Chronic Care Programmes for high blood pressure, Diabetes and high cholesterol provide structured care packages which ensure that these common chronic ailments are well managed and controlled. This, in the long term, will reduce the risk of future serious complications such as blindness and kidney failure in diabetic patients, stroke in patients with poorly controlled blood pressures, and heart attack in patients with high cholesterol. Patients enrolled in the programmes will benefit from the comprehensive care provided by dedicated medical teams, the lower treatment costs and the patient tracking system.

Tampines and Chua Chu Kang polyclinics are the two pilot sites for the programmes, which will be provided in all polyclinics from April 2001. The programmes are expected to cost the Government an additional \$24.5 million a year.

The other scheme, also recently launched on 1st Oct, is the Primary Care Partnership Scheme which aims to provide responsive primary healthcare to elderly Singaporeans who need subsidized care in areas not well served by the polyclinic network. Under this novel scheme, private general practitioners will be contracted to provide common out-patient primary care services for simple medical conditions such as coughs and colds. Singaporeans aged 65 years and above with a per capita household income of \$700 and below are eligible for the scheme which is now being piloted for the residents in 4 areas – Kreta Ayer Division of Kreta Ayer-Tanglin GRC, Jalan Besar Division of Jalan Besar GRC, Simei estate and Bukit Panjang new town. Based on feedback over the next three years, the extension of the scheme to other areas will be considered.

The Ministry of Health will continue to review and put in place new health care initiatives to ensure that Singaporeans have access to health care services which are both of high standards and affordable. We would



Performance given by MINDS

welcome any idea and suggestion that the industry may have that will help us further improve our health delivery system.

## ***Development in Local Clinical Trials***

Another area that I would like to touch on is the progress made in the development of Clinical Trials in Singapore. I believe this is a topic that is of interest to many of you here this evening.

From the early 70's to the early 90's, most local drug trials conducted in Singapore were phase IV post-marketing trials on established drugs which had been used for some time. In recent years, many multinational pharmaceutical companies have initiated clinical trials on new drugs in Asia, particularly drugs for diseases prevalent in indigenous populations, such as Hepatitis B. Singapore has proved to be an attractive clinical trial center because of its efficient infrastructure and strong Government support. The Singapore Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, implemented in August 1998 to further enhance the ethical and scientific standards of clinical research in Singapore, has helped set the stage for Singapore to be a major international drug research hub.

The attraction of Singapore as a clinical research centre is evident from the increasing number of new players that have come on board over the past few years. Today, the majority of clinical drug trials conducted in Singapore are pre-marketing trials. In 1999, 65% of the 114 clinical trial certificates issued were for pre-marketing trials while the remaining 35% were for post-marketing trials.

The Ministry of Health is fully aware that for Singapore to stay competitive in clinical research in the region, one of the key factors is the approval timeline for clinical trial while maintaining high standards of protocol evaluation. To further shorten clinical trial approval timelines, the Ministry has recently set up the Clinical Trials Coordinating Committee (CTCC) to coordinate the ethical review of trials to be conducted in more than one institution in Singapore. The centralized review by the CTCC is expected to significantly shorten the approval timeline as it is no longer necessary for the various ethics

committees in the various participating trial institutions to carry out separate reviews. I trust that this is welcome news for all of you who are involved in the conduct of clinical trials in Singapore.



Donating to a good cause. All proceeds went to MINDS

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to commend SAPI for having upheld the high standards of marketing practices in Singapore by ensuring that your members comply with the established Code of Marketing Practices and the Code of Ethics jointly drawn up with the Singapore Medical Association.

The Ministry looks forward to continued support and cooperation from SAPI in maintaining the high standards of healthcare services in Singapore and in developing Singapore as a pharmaceutical research hub in the region.

I wish all of you a pleasant and enjoyable evening.

*SAPI wishes everyone a Happy New Year.*

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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*Share with us your suggestions and comments. Please address them to :*

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