

# Tips from the experts: local advice for local practice

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In line with the Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ) changing with the times<sup>(1)</sup>, we are pleased to inaugurate a new series entitled “Tips from the Experts”. This series aims to provide stimulating and concise advice amidst the overwhelming amount of information that is currently available. Each essay is written by local experts for the local (and regional) audience. The SMJ hopes that this series will encourage readers to upgrade their medical knowledge beyond just meeting numerical continuing medical education (CME) requirements.

The main challenges facing healthcare provision in Singapore are the ageing of the population and the rising costs of healthcare. Perhaps there is a limit to how long we can exist. Perhaps adding life to years is as important as adding years to life. In essence, we and our patients should all aim to live healthily and fully, or as healthily as possible, to the last. And then, just depart with minimal suffering, and, with minimal costs to the individual, family, society and nation. This is not easy to achieve, particularly in the presence of diabetes mellitus.

Diabetes mellitus is much more than just a question of high blood sugar levels. The interaction between genetic and environmental factors, and the resultant macro- and microvascular effects are particularly worrying in Asian populations<sup>(2,3)</sup>. The prevalence in Singapore was 9% in 1998 and this is expected to increase, with frightening implications for quality and length of life<sup>(4)</sup>.

Among diabetes mellitus’ multisystem effects, the cardiovascular complications have received the most attention. This is understandable, as the majority of diabetics in Singapore die from cardiovascular disease, and often at the first myocardial infarction<sup>(5)</sup>. As we seek to add life to years, it is helpful that the first article in the Tips from the Experts series focuses instead on the relation of diabetes mellitus with the largest organ in the body – the skin<sup>(6)</sup>. The team of dermatology and endocrinology authors are to be congratulated for combining their expertise to guide us to both look at and look deeper than the skin. We hope that you will enjoy the illustrated learning experience. 

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