

The 8th SMA House Officers' Seminar 2002

"It's About What You Haven't Learnt in Medical School"

By Dr Apoorva Gogna

It was with a glimmer of nostalgia but mostly a huge sigh of relief as we, the medical class of 2001 handed over the reins of HO-ship to new blood. But looking back to twelve months ago, most of us could still remember the near-panic felt as we faced our first day of work and our first night duties as brand new doctors. The HO seminar last year went a long way towards relieving some of our anticipation. The talks by our seniors were entertaining yet enlightening for the reality we would be facing in a few days' time.

It was thus with a sense of continuity that some of us got together to organize the 8th SMA HO Seminar. As usual, the SMA MO Committee Chairman, Dr Ng Yih Yng started the ball rolling and a sub-committee was quickly formed with Dr Ng Kar Hui, HO at Alexandra Hospital (Medicine) and former MedSoc President, at the helm.

The generosity of SMA and sponsors – primarily United Medical Protection, the pharmaceuticals and the efficiency of the SMA Secretariat, also made the seminar relatively easy to organize and we managed to book a comfortable function room at Suntec Singapore.

The seminar was divided into three parts with talks by outgoing HOs, speeches by Dons and specialists in various fields, and finally, small group discussions which allowed the new HOs posted to various departments to interact with the immediate outgoing HOs. We also put out a new edition of the HO Survival Guide (written by Dr Fong Sau Shung), and for the first time, we came up with our very own pocket-sized drug list which contains all the drugs and dosages that we fervently wished we had known during our first night call. The latter was an excellent effort by Dr Gerald Tan, and was kindly sponsored by Bayer (South East Asia) Pte Ltd BG-Pharma. Finally, we got the new HOs off to a flying start with practical door gifts such as lots of pens, torchlights, instant coffee and many others.

Dr Ng Kar Hui fulfilled the role of emcee. There were five main HO-speakers who offered practical tips on the following topics: "The Ward Round" by Dr Lee Khai Pin; "Changes" by Dr Tor Phern Chern; "Clerking the New Case" by Dr Fong Sau Shung; "The Night Call" by Dr Apoorva Gogna and finally

"Working with Your Colleagues" by Dr Jeremy Chow.

After a short break, Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, Director of Medical Services and well known to all of us as the former Dean of Medicine, enlightened us on "The Doctor as Medical Administrator". This was followed by Prof C. Rajasoorya who gave a visually appealing Powerpoint presentation on how HOs would be assessed during housemanship and the challenges ahead during our future careers. Mr Lek Siang Pheng, a lawyer in private practice and well-versed in Medical Law, emphasized the practical aspects of the medico-legal scene in Singapore and emphasized that obtaining medical insurance was mandatory before practicing Medicine to prevent financial tragedy from a lawsuit that may arise even in cases where the medical practitioner may be absolutely error-free.

Finally, short presentations by Dr Ng Yih Yng on the function of the MO Committee, and Dr Tham Tat Yean on the benefits of joining SMA, brought a very fruitful and interesting lecture series to a close and we all broke up into small groups to discuss the upcoming HO-postings with our friends from the Class of 2002.

We look back at this HO seminar and our year of housemanship with a great sense of achievement. Besides the triumph of completing housemanship, we also had the chance of catching up with friends whom we have not met for almost a year. We had great fun brainstorming for ideas and sharing our experiences during the few weekend afternoons over Starbucks Coffee. We hope the future batch of HOs will continue this tradition of sharing their experiences with their juniors. ■

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Prof Rajasoorya gave a comprehensive presentation on how HOs would be assessed during housemanship, as well as other challenges ahead.

About the Author:
 Dr Gogna (MBBS, 2001) graduated from NUS. He is currently a Medical Officer in the KKH Paediatric Surgery Department. He was Valedictorian for his graduation class.