

By Mr Lam Meng Chon

Silver Lining

Year 3 began with a short and simple briefing where we received our individual timetables and such. Lectures started at the very next instant, then came tutorials, clinics, Operating Theatre sessions, night calls, ward rounds, more tutorials, and the list goes on. The feeling of extreme stupidity has become a daily affair as tutors fire questions at us with so much vigour that we often wonder if they remember the days when *they* were clinical infants like us. Being a really below-average student, I cannot help but ponder the possibility that graduation might just never come true. The vicious cycle of being stupid continues week after week to the point where you become really convinced that you just have to accept the cold hard facts and either work harder or sink deeper. However, the chance of sinking is actually lower, thanks to my fellow classmates who continuously motivate me to go further – something I consider a great blessing. It is always interesting to see how different people respond to the ups and downs of medical school. The extremely *kiasu* ones never fail to shock us with their energy to go all day and all out!

Communication skills were yet another major hurdle. To some, it might seem like a natural ability but to others, it was hard work. I remember one of my encounters with an English-speaking old lady when I tried to elicit her motor power response.

Me: “Auntie, can you resist me?”

Me (presenting): “The lady was unable to resist me.”

Choice of words has become an issue. Soon,

we too discovered that the way we approach patients could be disastrous as well. One of my tutors would even describe it as a “cardinal sin” if we did not kneel beside the patient while doing an examination for abdominal organomegaly.

Thus far, the only thing that keeps me going is the patient. Given their physical discomfort, they could simply refuse any of our incessant requests for clerking and physical examination. It is absolutely understandable. However, they are often more than willing to help us through the invaluable learning process. In fact, it is neither the call of the tutors nor the forever daunting tutorials that has led me to the daily rituals of reading up, but the urge and desire to learn more about each and every patient’s condition and possibly help future generations, which has propelled me to continue with such an arduous journey.

At the end of the day, I realise that medical school is definitely not about absorbing knowledge passively and being spoon-fed. Rather, the sole purpose of medical school is to provide the necessary basic tools for budding young doctors to become competent medical practitioners. That, however simple it may sound, can really be an uphill task.

Now that my very first posting is coming to an end, the prospect and fear of yet another impending examination beckons. Strangely, however, I do look forward to the next rotation and the many rotations after that, for each is a new adventure. Sure, we will have our ups and downs, but as the saying goes, there is always a silver lining somewhere. ■



Meng Chon is a third year medical student who treasures his sleep and food. Originally from Macau, he is often spotted in *dim sum* restaurants or sometimes seen playing tennis with or without the table. He hopes to specialise in a field beginning with ‘O’ someday.