

An Insider's Take on

RADIOLOGY

Text by Dr Chan Wan Ying, Dr Jonathan Sng and Dr Sonia Lee



Is the transformative age of radiology already here or has it not yet arrived? Do radiologists really dislike people? Do radiology trainees trod a lonely life of examinations in isolation?

Many, including aspiring medical students, may hold certain misconceptions about this dynamic and ever-advancing specialty. *SMA News* has thus asked three radiologists to each share with us a short snippet on their thoughts and experiences. Read on to find out more.

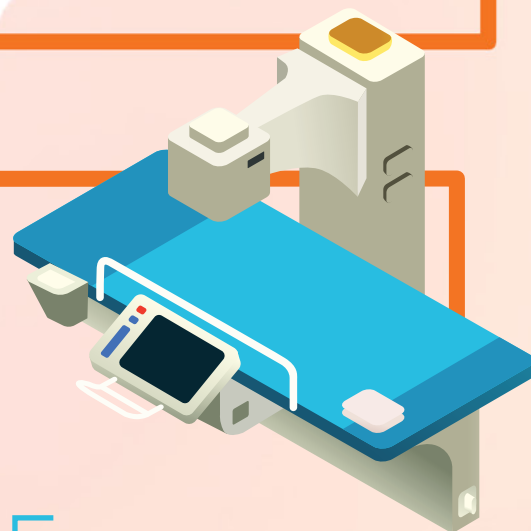
I believe that we are witnessing the transformative era of radiology. The specialty has come a long way since Roentgen's famous hand X-ray in 1895. My radiology training is very different from my mentor's, and his generation practically wrote the textbooks of radiology as we know today. Especially in the last few decades, the scope of our practice has been expanding as rapidly as the advancements in medical technology.

In my first year, X-rays were taught as the foundation of radiology. Yet during my entire medical school training, I have read more microscope slides than X-ray films. This is how I remember reading my first X-ray: standing on

shaky ground, with sweaty palms and casting a suspicious glare... on the normal film. The dark reading room ended up hiding my flushed face more than once.

I have come a long way since that first film, with more than 10,000 films under my belt in the span of my residency. A wise person once said: To struggle is to grow. When I reflect on my residency, the person who has emerged is not the same as the one before.

With artificial intelligence looking to be the next frontier of radiology, perhaps my juniors' residencies will also be vastly different from mine. The transformative era of radiology is, to me, already here.



Dr Chan Wan Ying is a fifth-year senior resident from the SingHealth Residency Diagnostic Radiology Programme. Her interests are in body and oncologic imaging. She can be found in a dark reporting room or under a pile of non-fiction books.





Dr Jonathan Sng is a senior resident in his fourth year of radiology training in the National University Health System. He is happily married and enjoys the depth and breadth of his work.

What do I like about radiology?

I enjoy the rapid pace of work, being involved in the care of many patients with diverse conditions and interacting with the doctors caring for them. For example, it is challenging and exciting to switch to discussing neuroimaging with a neurologist shortly after performing an ultrasound with the paediatric surgeons.

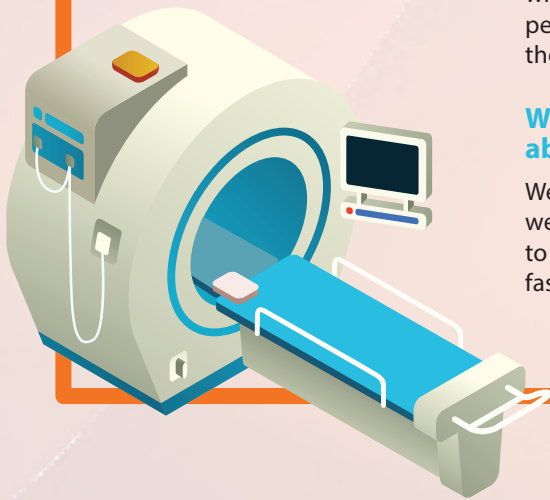
What do I dislike about radiology?

We can never have an "off" day. If we are tired or pushing ourselves to interpret examinations faster, the mistakes we make

are captured for posterity as imaging is stored forever.

Are there any misconceptions?

Some stereotypes about radiologists include us disliking people and having a relaxed work day. While it is true that our day is not physically intense (apart from interventional radiology), there is almost never a time in which we stop thinking or are not mentally engaged with the scans. While all specialties have a variety of personalities, radiologists as a whole are quite friendly, although it may be true that many prefer to talk to doctors rather than patients.



One of the many special things about training in radiology is the sheer number of examinations that we take over the course of five years. That's 17 to be exact. Our 14th examination, the FRCR 2B, is our most challenging hurdle. It is incredibly tedious and expensive to prepare for, and the overall pass rate averages 60% to 70%. That may seem pretty reasonable, but in an average cohort of 14 candidates, that translates to four friends staying behind.

A close-knit group of us who were studying together for this examination in 2017 agreed that we would pay it forward after clearing this hurdle. We created a comprehensive preparatory course simulating examination conditions, appropriately named the Little Red

Dot Course, run by senior residents for junior residents. We aimed to provide our juniors with a fresh perspective on the most effective strategies in acing this exam in a non-threatening environment. By doing this, we hoped to not only improve the overall pass rate but also create a strong teaching culture among residents.

We have recently completed our second annual run of this course, which has been well received by our juniors and well supported by our residency programme. We are happy to report that the overall pass rate improved to 90.9% in 2018 and 100% in 2019, hopefully in part due to our efforts!

We are heartened to be able to make a positive impact in our

juniors' training, and we seek to continue to improve this course and nurture educators of the next generation of radiologists. ♦

Dr Sonia Lee is the current chief resident at the SingHealth Residency Diagnostic Radiology Programme who is on hiatus for maternity leave. Life has acutely shifted from interpreting 256 shades of grey to satiating her very own eat-poop-sleep machine with her long-suffering husband.

