

THE TURMOIL OF A TRAINEE

Review by Dr Tina Tan, Deputy Editor

One can argue that since this book is set in the UK and was published in response to the National Health Service crisis of 2016 (which is still ongoing), there wouldn't be much relevance to reading it in our local Singaporean context.

However, the feelings evoked by this book – the emotions, the situations and the people – were so much like what I had experienced as a house officer and during my training years that it gave me flashbacks. I suspect many who read this book would agree as well. It will bring laughter (or tears) to those who can empathise with and relate to Adam's thoughts. And as the saying goes, it will open the eyes of those who have no idea what it's like "on the ground".

Written in a blunt, honest fashion with deadpan humour, even the appendices, which were written by Adam to explain certain medical terms, are funny.

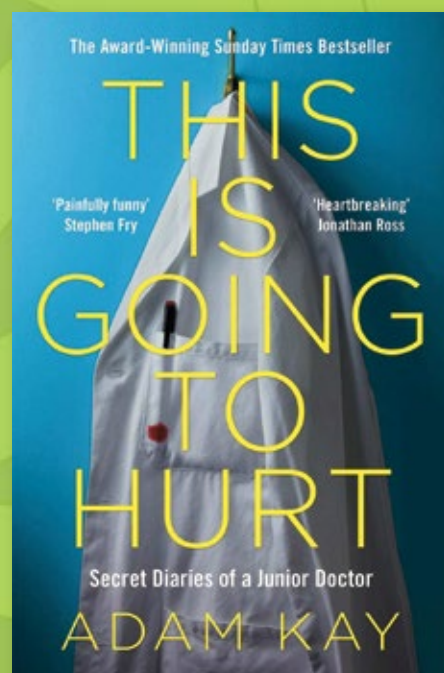
What's less funny is the situation that Adam was operating under as he went through his training years – severe manpower shortages and doctors working while exhausted, all while juggling examinations, family and relationships. And the heartbreaking ending – the incident that finally caused him to throw in the towel. Evidently, this book highlights the need to ensure adequate resources are available for junior doctors – not just in terms of manpower, but also in terms of support and guidance especially when bad things happen (because they do).

The book ends with an open letter to Britain's Secretary of State for

Health. It won't take much to figure out who this particular Secretary is (apparently, he's famous for all the wrong reasons). I especially appreciate the sentiment reflected here: "You and your successor... should have to work some shifts alongside junior doctors. Not the thing you already do, where a chief executive shows you round a brand-new ward that's gleaming like a space station... I defy any human being, even you, to know what the job really entails and question a single doctor's motivation."

While this isn't the platform to get political or rant at "the system", it is good to know that there are other people, in other countries, who face the same issues as we do – manpower shortages, adverse events, or being misunderstood by the public, politicians and/or journalists. This is a refreshing and easy read that touches the heart with its brutal honesty. ♦

Dr Tan is a consultant at the Institute of Mental Health and has a special interest in geriatric psychiatry. She is also an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. Between work and family life, she squeezes time out for her favourite pastimes – reading a good (fiction) book and writing.



Title: This Is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor

Author: Adam Kay

Number of pages: 267

ISBN: 9781509858651

Type of book: Paperback

Publisher: Picador (GB)

Year of publication: 2017