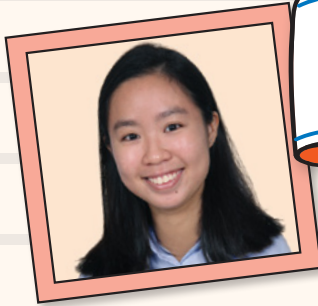


Mid-Year Check-In

Lessons Learnt and Goals Ahead



SMSUK members at *Wicked the musical*



Chin Sue-Kay

Editor, SMSUK

With our Singapore Medical Society of the UK (SMSUK) members spread across 25 different UK medical and dental schools, opportunities for everyone to meet and connect can be sparse, especially during the pandemic. During the past two months however, SMSUK held our first in-person events since COVID-19 began in March 2020.

On 23 November 2021, 57 SMSUK members gathered in London to watch the musical *Wicked* – the famous tale of the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch; the backstory to the *Wizard of Oz*. The award-winning musical did not disappoint as show-goers were enthralled by renowned songs such

as “Defying Gravity” and “For Good”. Following that, our SMSUK congregation headed to Lime Orange, a Korean restaurant just round the corner, for a delicious set meal. We were thankful that the entire restaurant had been booked out as we were boisterous!

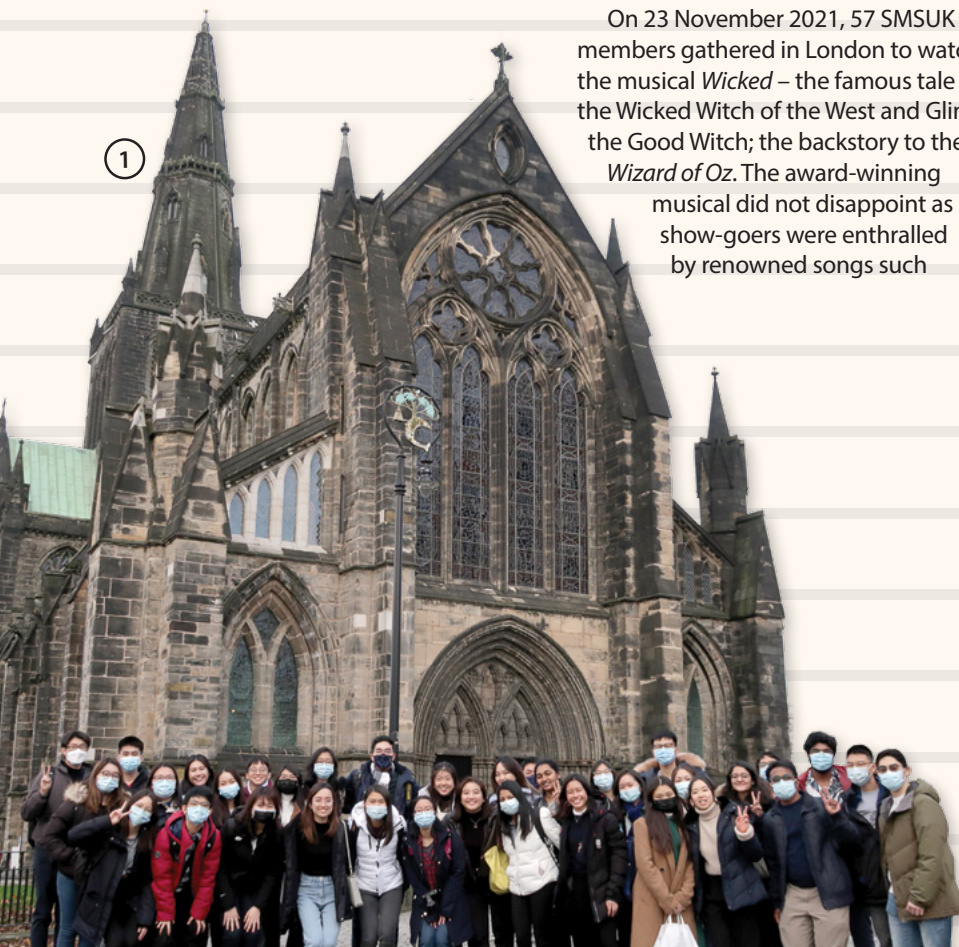
For our members outside of London, we held a “Wider UK Trip” in Glasgow, Scotland, voted as “one of the world’s friendliest cities”. Blessed with unexpected sunny weather in otherwise often gloomy Scotland, participants visited famous sites such as the Glasgow Necropolis, Glasgow Cathedral and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. The trip ended with a taste of home at a Chinese restaurant and members singing their hearts out at karaoke. We hope that our members have enjoyed the in-person social events and we thank all participants for their time, enthusiasm and responsibility in following our COVID-19 safety measures.

As we are fast approaching the midway point of our members’ academic year, we asked some of them to reflect on their medical school experience thus far and their hopes and goals for the new year, two of which are shared here.

Legend

1. SMSUK Members at the Glasgow Cathedral

1



Text by *Saranya Siva*

To say that the past one-and-a-half years have been a whirlwind of emotions would be an understatement. I was in my third year of medical school when the pandemic began and now, I am in my final year. Looking back, it has been an extraordinary albeit (occasionally) tumultuous journey. I remember commencing medical school being all bright-eyed yet terrified of what laid ahead of me. It was my first time living abroad and I had so many concerns on my mind; from academics to living independently, and even maintaining my ties back home. It is a lot easier said than done and being in the middle of a pandemic has not made it easier.

If I could offer a piece of advice, it is to stay in the present and trust the journey you are on. That was my biggest takeaway from the last couple of years.

Initially, everything may seem daunting and out of control. However, one should treasure the moment instead of worrying about what comes next.

For instance in 2020, I was seeing fewer patients and a good chunk of my learning was done online due to COVID-19. I worried if the clinical exposure I had would suffice. Despite the futility of doing so, I spent time worrying about my situation instead of enjoying my placements, which in retrospect were well planned given the circumstances.

Thus, in my final year, I am going forth with a more positive outlook. I am prioritising my physical and mental health, which took a dip last year. I am also ensuring that I spend time with my loved ones while balancing the hectic revision preparation. Although the

situation this year has not improved significantly in terms of restrictions and reduced clinical exposure, I am enjoying it a lot more and have been making full use of the resources available. My goals for the new year are to continue taking care of my health, graduate university and enjoy a well-deserved break with my friends and family. All the best to everyone for the upcoming year, and thanks for reading!

Saranya is a Year 5 medical student at the University of Manchester.



Text by *Gabriel Kwok*

As I write this from my East London home, the falling autumn leaves mark another changing of the seasons. Exactly one year ago, I was back home in Singapore, streaming tutorials over 10,000 km of nebulous aether at midnight, while crouched behind my new blackout curtains. Even though induced deliberately, delayed sleep phase syndrome proved quite the challenge indeed, saliently enhancing the presyncopic effect of lectures.

Suffice to say, my first year was far from my finest performance, although it was probably the best I could manage, given the circumstances. COVID-19 aside, I struggled for some time with the sheer volume of ostensibly piecemeal information I was expected to memorise. Here, my school's spiral curriculum became a double-edged sword. With the spiral, the idea is to cover the entire human body twice in the first two preclinical years, circling back to the same concepts in different contexts and with greater detail. This approach is sensible, but it

does sacrifice depth in favour of breadth when first starting out. Many concepts must be understood in their wider pathophysiological contexts, but I was still learning only half that very context!

Emerging into my second tour of the body, I found myself relieved to have that physiological context in the bag. Although the volume of knowledge is occasionally still a problem, I am now often wrestling with how to organise these oft-disjointed ideas into clinically relevant frameworks. Recently, this led to an interesting conversation with a senior, who dismissed an entire lecture series as patently useless in a clinical context, because it was not explicitly part of any clinical reasoning chain. Now, he certainly had a point about clinical practicalities, and I am aware of how little I have seen from my current vantage point, but this nonetheless struck me as disingenuous. While I have certainly not needed every tiny little detail from past lectures, many things would have made a lot less sense this year without that

previous round of diligent study. I am still elucidating the fine lines between mere knowledge and wisdom, but I am beginning to suspect it looks something like this: knowledge is memorising the full glycolytic cascade, while wisdom is explicitly knowing just the controlling irreversible steps, retaining a proximate scaffold to fill in pro re nata.

I very much suspect I might be proven at least partially wrong in the coming years, but as any good methodologist would say, post hoc analyses are only hypothesis-generating, at best! ♦

Gabriel is a Year 2 medical student at Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry.

