

TRAINED TO TAKE THE STAND

Text by Jasmine Soo, Executive, Event and Committee Support

"I thought that the medical report exercise was an excellent way to reflect on practise analysis in a systematic way and to write in an organised fashion. Explaining in layman's term, yet not sacrificing scientific rigour, is hard work! Deeply appreciate the organising committee, administrative staff and faculty for a mind-expanding course."

– Participant of MEWT 2018

The Medical Expert Witness Training (MEWT) 2018 was held over three Saturdays, 12 May, 30 June and 7 July, with a total of 51 participants hailing from different specialties. This is the fourth run of this annual training and was co-organised by Academy of Medicine, Singapore, SMA, Singapore Academy of Law and the Law Society of Singapore.

An expert witness is one who possesses special knowledge and experience on a subject, enabling him/her to give opinions and draw conclusions relevant to a case to impartially and objectively assist the court or tribunal in its work. Expert witnesses are expected to articulate the standard of care in medical negligence and standard of professional conduct in disciplinary tribunals, and

also provide an opinion supported by good arguments and evidence as to whether the standard is met.

This course provides participants with case scenarios where they are then tasked to write and submit reports based on their assigned roles as either Plaintiffs or Defendants. The reports were then reviewed and marked by the faculty and returned to the participants.

The course content

We were very honoured to have The Honourable Justice Belinda Ang Saw Ean deliver the opening address. The Day 1 session covered the important points that a medical expert should take note of (ie, Instructions on Writing an Expert Report, Common Pitfalls in Writing an Expert Report, How to Prepare for Court, and Drafting an Expert Report). What to expect and the associated skills required in the courtroom were also taught to the participants.

Day 2 started with "Reviewing the Assignment and Common Errors Made" followed by the role play session, which was held on Days 2 and 3. Even for senior doctors, being on the stand as an expert witness is often a very stressful

experience. Being in an actual courtroom, delivering an oral testimony and then being cross-examined by judges and lawyers during the training sessions provided a realistic, safe and guided learning experience for the participants.

The three-day course concluded with the closing address and presentation ceremony by Mr Gregory Vijayendran, President of the Law Society of Singapore.

Participants provided much positive feedback, with one finding the MEWT "a very useful course for physicians who often have no experience and learning in the legal aspects and in the courtrooms, but may end up being an expert witness. It was an educational and eye-opening experience."

We thank the following speakers for their contribution to yet another successful run of the course: Ms Kuah Boon Theng, Director, Legal Clinic LLC; Mr Edmund Kronenburg, Managing Partner, Braddell Brothers LLP; Mr Lek Siang Pheng, Partner, Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP; and Dr Joseph Sheares, Cardiothoracic Surgeon, Cardiothoracic Surgical Centre Singapore. We would also like to thank all medical trainers, district judges, lawyers, participants and the organising committee for taking the time to be part of MEWT 2018, and for making it a wonderful and enriching experience for everyone. ♦

Legend

1. Group photo with Guest of Honour Justice Belinda Ang (centre)

