



Investing in the Future of Healthcare

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Is the medical profession future-ready? What are the trends in medicine? How are the doctors of tomorrow being moulded to meet the needs of the community? These are some of the questions addressed at this year's **SMA Lecture** and **National Medical Students' Convention (NMSC)** on 10 November at Novotel Singapore on Stevens.

Inaugurated in 1963, the SMA Lectureship is a prestigious annual lecture delivered by a distinguished speaker on medical ethics and related topics that are pertinent in the day. Speakers in the 55-year history of the Lecture include Dr Gwee Ah Leng (1963), Emeritus Professor Wong Hock Boon (1979), Professor Arthur Lim (1981), Mr Justice P Coomaraswamy (1989), Professor Woo Keng Thye (2007) and Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon (2012). Over the years, many respected seniors and young doctors alike have set aside time to attend these Lectures, both for the intellectually stimulating discussions as well as the networking opportunities at the event.

Inaugurated in 2017, the SMA National Medical Students' Convention provides an opportunity for students of all three local medical schools to come together for a day of learning and networking. Through the discussion of important issues pertinent to medical education, the Convention seeks to provide clarity on students' roles as future doctors in an evolving medical training and practice landscape. In its first run, A/Prof Benjamin Ong delivered the keynote address "The Future of Singapore Healthcare and What It Means to Medical Students Today".



SMA Lecture

The 2018 Lecture – “The Future of Medical Education” was delivered by A/Prof Yeoh Khay Guan, Dean of Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine) and Deputy Chief Executive of National University Health System. The Lecture explored the implications of shifting trends in Singapore healthcare and its impact on medical education. The notable event drew an audience of more than 150, comprising doctors, educators, medical students, even A-Level students and their parents.

In his welcome address, SMA President Dr Lee Yik Voon highlighted the heavier emphasis on medical ethics and professionalism in the current medical curriculum, which he believes should be taught in practice and not merely as a module. After all, he surmised, “learning, understanding and incorporating professionalism are different things.”

“While we’re here primarily to learn from the SMA Lecture, we [participants] can also benefit from the SMA Lecturer’s achievements, character and values.” With that in mind, A/Prof Chin Jing Jih delivered the citation of A/Prof Yeoh Khay Guan, regaling the audience with his many achievements and notable contributions to the healthcare sector – with great admiration and some well-injected humour (see page 10).

Gearing for the future

A/Prof Yeoh began his Lecture with a quick poll to get a better grasp of the diversity of his audience. There was a fine mix of aspiring medical students and medical doctors, both GPs and specialists (of which a good portion had graduated more than 20 years ago).

In his brief introduction, A/Prof Yeoh listed some of the key challenges that the current healthcare system faces, as well as the shifts and transformation of healthcare going forward, before focusing on these five key issues: Technology; Changes in Practice Patterns; Changes in the Role of the Doctor; Medicine, Science and Innovation; and finally, the Future-Ready Doctor.

With the use of comic strips and videos, A/Prof Yeoh aptly demonstrated the two facets of the application of technology in today’s medical education and healthcare. One of the videos gave the audience

a glimpse of a helpful tool in medical education: the Virtual Interactive Human Anatomy, otherwise known as VIHA, which offers a close-up and interactive learning experience of the human anatomy. As he delved into the role that artificial intelligence (AI) plays in healthcare, A/Prof Yeoh encouraged the audience to think of “AI” as “augmented intelligence” instead – one that serves to support and assist healthcare professionals in their practice. Additionally, he reminded everyone that the human touch that doctors offer to their patients cannot be replaced and thus soft skills and values are especially important in this era.

That is why being future-ready starts as early as the selection of students; aside from their academic performance, students are also assessed on other attributes and values precious to the profession. These are then further inculcated through incorporating values-driven actions and community services. A/Prof Yeoh also echoed the call for more generalists, especially with the changing role of the doctor.

Concluding his Lecture, A/Prof Yeoh shared with the audience that “The future is bright and exciting, but it will not be easy”, because there are challenges to overcome. He then proceeded to sum up the ten key skills he believes tomorrow’s



doctors will need to overcome the challenges ahead. Among them included leadership skills, soft skills, skills for lifelong learning, a high degree of adaptability and versatility in the health system and, most of all, the continued trust and support from the community.

A vibrant discussion

Panellists:

- A/Prof Yeoh Khay Guan
- Dr Anantham Devanand, Council Member, SMA; Head, SingHealth Duke-NUS Lung Centre; Senior Consultant Physician, Department of Respiratory & Critical Care Medicine, Singapore General Hospital
- Dr Dujeepa Samarasekera, Director, Centre for Medical Education, NUS Medicine; President, College of Clinician Educators, Academy of Medicine, Singapore
- Dr Chia Li Ann, Faith, Senior Consultant, Rheumatology, Allergy & Immunology, Tan Tock Seng Hospital; Designated Institutional Officer, National Healthcare Group Residency

Moderator:

- A/Prof Tan Choon Kiat, Nigel, Council Member, SMA

The panel discussion was ablaze with excitement as doctors, educators, current and aspiring



medical students, and even the panellists themselves posed and addressed many burning questions that arose. Unsurprisingly, the question of whether AI will eventually replace doctors was raised and the panellists agreed that despite being unable to predict the future, it is clear that doctors will always be in demand and are irreplaceable, though what is needed from doctors may change in the future. Other topics of concern included whether students, educators and clinicians are being protected considering the growing expectations; whether students are

entering into medical school at the right age; and the accuracy of the mini interviews when it comes to assessing attributes in applicants. The panellists took turns to address each question with wisdom and foresight, sharing their honest opinions and knowledge gained from their respective capacities.

After what was an engaging and thought-provoking panel discussion, the appreciative participants applauded A/Prof Yeoh for the great Lecture and the panellists for the lively discussion, before continuing their discussions over drinks and snacks.



Legend

1. SMA Council Members posing for a fun shot with A/Prof Yeoh Khay Guan and the panellists
2. A student raising a question for discussion
3. Participants listening intently
4. A moment of humour
5. Dr Lee Yik Voon presenting the token of appreciation to A/Prof Yeoh



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2nd SMA National Medical Students' Convention

The second edition of the SMA NMSC saw students from the three local medical schools converge once again for a time of learning, mindfulness and engagement. Graced by A/Prof Benjamin Ong, Director of Medical Services (DMS), Ministry of Health (MOH), the convention sought to address hot-button topics relevant to current medical students.

In his welcome speech, Thurston Heng, chairperson of the NMSC, explained how the theme of this year's convention with its emphasis on health and the community was selected, and hoped that the participants would benefit from the carefully planned programme. Dr Lee Yik Voon, in his opening speech, let us in on how medical students and newly minted doctors have been in regular contact with SMA over concerns regarding upcoming changes in training models – a testament to the need for continual inter-school collaboration and support

of the SMA Doctors in Training (DIT) Committee, to reduce confusion and allay fears of what is to come.

Doctors of tomorrow

It was all ears when A/Prof Ong took to the stage to deliver his keynote address on "Paradigm Shifts in Medical Training and What It Means for Medical Students Today". He spoke at length on Singapore's population and our fight against chronic diseases, transformation of care models and the paralleled importance of nurturing doctors who are fit-for-purpose. He highlighted the main upstream strategy of moving from treatment focus to health promotion and disease prevention.

Assuring the audience of a high-quality education programme, A/Prof Ong shared the MOH's aim to accredit all three medical schools by 2022, as well as to prescribe core learning outcomes for all graduates to ensure that they are ready for postgraduate year 1. Specialist training standards will also be introduced in 2020 to ensure that specialist and family medicine training programmes meet common baseline requirements.

In his closing, A/Prof Ong encouraged students to choose broad-based specialties that meet Singapore's needs, such as family medicine, internal medicine and geriatric medicine, among others. Students were also urged to embrace lifelong learning and to provide seamless, appropriate and cost-effective care to patients by working with fellow healthcare colleagues.

Sharing of experiences

Panellists:

- A/Prof Benjamin Ong
- A/Prof Denise Goh, Associate Professor, Department of Paediatrics, NUS Medicine; Head and Senior Consultant, Division of Paediatric Genetics and Metabolism, Khoo Teck Puat-National University Children's Medical Institute, National University Hospital
- Dr Ng Chew Lip, Council Member, SMA; Associate Consultant, Ear, Nose and Throat – Head and Neck Surgery, Ng Teng Fong General Hospital

Moderator:

- Dr Ivan Low, Chairperson of the 1st SMA NMSC

In a bid to better address medical students' queries on training and specialisation, this segment of the programme allowed the sharing of first-hand comments and experiences from our esteemed panellists. On the topic of specialty selection, A/Prof Denise Goh shared that many students enter medical school with a set pathway for themselves. She opined that as a doctor in a vocation of service, one should be intelligent enough to be adaptable during their journey. A query was raised on how DITs can ensure that Government policies (eg, working hours) are effective, especially in organisations with strong hierarchical forces. In answer, students were advised to give specific feedback and possible solutions to the ministries involved,



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and engage the SMA DIT Committee, whose role is to represent junior doctors who may feel unfairly treated. Also addressed were the issues of tailoring expectations for competition, paradigm shifts in gender roles, and the need to be the best that one can be in their pursuit of medicine.

Mindful or “mind full”?

After a short break, Ms Jennifer Davis, Director, Student Personal and Professional Leadership, Duke-NUS Medical School; Clinical Psychotherapist and Mindfulness Trainer, took to the stage for a sharing session on mindfulness and its application in overcoming challenges, pressure, information overload and distractions. Students were led to perform a simple breathing exercise to detach from physical distractions and “check in” with their body. The silence in the room was palpable and it was evident that this short and simple exercise provided the participants with a much needed reprieve from the flurry of daily life. The students were then encouraged to share their experience with one another – was it a mindful meditation or were their minds full of busy thoughts and stressors?

Students then filled out the Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire, a widely used psychological instrument that measures the respondents’ level of control over their lives and how they think they can manage stress. When asked to share about their main sources of stress, many cited examinations, relationship conflicts and lack of time for oneself; a crowd favourite was the need to live up to



one’s personal expectations. Through a short test, students also learnt that multitasking is a myth – there’s only rapid refocusing of the mind! Ms Davis shared the science behind mindfulness training, and how to “retrain” one’s brain to be present in the moment without being overwhelmed.

A fulfilling experience

When we spoke with the participants, it was evident that the main take-home message was to change one’s perspective to flow with the current shifts in medicine and, in particular, endeavour to specialise in disciplines that will meet the needs of Singaporeans. Many also acknowledged the need to serve selflessly for the good of the community.

In a nutshell, this annual joint effort by student leaders of the three medical schools is commendable to say the least, and we are convinced that there should be more of such opportunities for medical students to collectively discuss issues that affect the way medicine is practised in the years to come.

It was all around a rewarding and fruitful day of activities for our more than 200 participants for the day and SMA looks forward to continuing in our efforts to bring valuable support to our Members and to bring together the profession. See you in 2019! ♦

Showcasing our work

On top of the rich content delivered in the ballroom, SMA also had the opportunity to showcase the many facets of our work to participants. Over the tea and lunch breaks, participants visited specially set-up booths to find out more about the privileges SMA Members enjoy, including the current SMA eMarket and membership year-end promotions. Many also tried their hands at a pop quiz at the SMA Academy and Publication booth, which won them small tokens of appreciation. Participants even got a sneak preview of the courses lined up in 2019, and were polled on the courses they wish to attend and the type of content they wish to see. At the SMA Charity Fund (SMACF) booth, participants understood more about the charity’s causes, as well as the importance of supporting needy aspiring doctors and the various means to help. Thanks to the support from several participants, SMACF reported a total donation of \$6,000 from that day’s outreach efforts!



Legend

- 6. A/Prof Benjamin Ong delivering his keynote address
- 7. Dr Ivan Low leading the panel discussion
- 8. Ms Jennifer Davis sharing on mindfulness
- 9. A student clarifying his doubts
- 10. Posing for a shot amid the sharing session