



The EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Dr Tina Tan

Editor

Dr Tan is a psychiatrist in private practice and an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. She treats mental health conditions in all age groups but has a special interest in caring for the elderly. With a love for the written word, she makes time for reading, writing and self-publishing on top of caring for her patients and loved ones.

Among the members of the SMA Council, Dr Lee Pheng Soon is well known for the stories he tells, especially the harrowing “those were the days” ones. His more recent sharing about his house officer (HO) days prompted our *SMA News* team to hunt down doctors who were willing to fondly recall the memories of their housemanship year and share what stood out about it. Understandably, for some, the recollection might have been a little traumatic, but we hope this wasn't too much of the case. I invite our readers to enjoy the Feature article and take a walk down memory lane with our contributors.

My own housemanship was notable for several reasons. I was on call on my second day of work and had no clue what I was doing. 8 am post-call

and bleary-eyed, I was scolded by a nurse for forgetting to dispose of my equipment properly from the night before. Setting foot in the call room was always a luxury. It is a bonus if the nurse likes you enough to give you some snacks in the middle of the night (although I've noticed that my male colleagues tended to be more well fed than me on these long nights). I spent one Chinese New Year's Eve on call (which was surprisingly quiet because most folks will “die die” [Singlish for being insistent on] choose to stay home for reunion dinner), then left the hospital to carry out my yearly 拜年 routine (traditional Chinese New Year family visiting).

I was also part of the first batch of graduates from Duke-NUS Medical School and many eyes were upon us to see if we would “sink or swim”. Thankfully, we all swam. My classmate and fellow psychiatrist, Dr Cecilia Kwok, and I were the only ones from Duke-NUS Medical School at the time to be posted outside of the “mother ship” (Singapore General Hospital) to other hospitals (namely, Tan Tock Seng Hospital [TTSH]) as part of the psychiatry residency programme, so the eyes on us were even more prominent. And it was there at TTSH,

while going through a month of trauma surgery posting, that I met our current SMA President, Dr Tan Yia Swam, who was a registrar at the time and pregnant with baby number one.

Ah, the memories. If not for that “traumatic” rotation, I probably wouldn't be writing this editorial for *SMA News*.

I will say this: housemanship is a type of battlefield. It forges people in a very distinctive way. You emerge from it and it is like a badge of honour to say, “I did my posting here with so-and-so”. It binds people together in ways that wouldn't ordinarily happen. You form friendships with your fellow HOs and seniors, bonding over food and coffee as you rejoice over your victories (“I set a plug on that renal patient!”) and disasters (“more admissions!”). I recently reconnected with a fellow houseman, Dr Mark Liew, who now runs his own GP practice and helped arrange my daughter's COVID-19 booster shot. And as I pen this, I am wondering where my fellow urology HO went, the one who stood opposite me as we did a bladder washout on a prostate cancer patient, with blood and urine splattering everywhere on us. If anyone knows where he is, tell him I said hi. ♦