

Gearing Up for the Career of a Lifetime



Text by Benjamin Ong, Editorial Executive
Photos by TriMedSoc Alliance

Medicine is not just a profession, but a calling. In recognition of this enduring dedication, the TriMedSoc Alliance, in collaboration with SMA, conducted the SMA 5th National Medical Students' Convention (NMSC), focused on the theme of "A Lifetime Career in Medicine".

The TriMedSoc Alliance is a gathering of students from each of Singapore's three medical schools' medical societies, for the purpose of unifying and representing the voices of the local medical student community. SMA is pleased to work with the TriMedSoc Alliance in hosting the SMA NMSC, which is the TriMedSoc Alliance's flagship event. This year's NMSC took place on Saturday, 6 May 2023, with a total of 66 attendees.

The convention was held in the Academia building on the Singapore General Hospital campus and was organised into two tracks. Track A was designed for junior medical students, to provide insight into and discussion about issues pertinent to their schooling and medical journeys. Track B on the other hand was designed to provide senior medical students with practical hands-on experiences. Attendees could choose to move between the tracks and attend whichever electives caught their eye. The organisers also provided a live-stream option for those joining in from overseas.

Beginning the day

Participants arrived early for the day's activities and the event began with a keynote address by Guest of Honour



Prof Kenneth Mak, Director-General of Health. Prof Mak praised the meticulous curation of the programme, noting the wide scope of topics, and that all local medical schools and all three healthcare clusters were represented in the line-up. He emphasised the commonality of issues medical students face, both local and overseas, and was glad that the TriMedSoc Alliance works to champion these concerns and promote a sense of cohesion between the schools.

Following Prof Mak's address, the attendees played an icebreaker game. They needed little encouragement, quickly mingling and engaging in lively conversation. While most attendees were medical students, there were also several tertiary students at the convention

who were eager to find out more about medical studies. Regardless of age or seniority, participants continued their spirited interactions and struck up fast friendships through the day.

Track A began with a hearty back-and-forth panel discussion comprising one faculty member and one student from each of the three local medical schools. The six speakers compared the medical schools' various pedagogies and approaches, and listeners quickly became engrossed in how aligned principles could nevertheless result in varied learning focuses. The speakers did not restrict themselves to top-down pedagogy, but also talked about organic student-led learning initiatives, the propensity for teachers to learn from their

“ I think these events are the sort that all [medical] students should attend. It may not seem immediately or directly relevant to many, but these topics will be important over the run of our medical careers.”

– Nathan Lee, M1, NUS Medicine (SMA 5th NMSC participant)



students, and even the educational role of generative artificial intelligence. Beyond academic learning, all agreed that the human touch was essential to caring for one's patients.

Track B was no less energetic, kicking off the morning with a game of “internal medicine Jeopardy”. In groups of three and four, the attendees competed to answer questions across many categories, from gastroenterology to cardiology and even medical history. Tough questions did not deter the attendees and instead spurred on vigorous discussion among themselves and the moderators. The moderators also shared numerous tips and tricks on how to better learn and recall medical facts.

Afternoon and beyond

After a filling buffet lunch, the two tracks continued to impart meaningful knowledge, share veteran doctors' experiences, and provide a wide range of hands-on activities. From a fun-filled backslab workshop to discussing burnout management, to a philosophical discussion of medical humanities and a suturing class, the convention covered a whole breadth of medical life. One elective even had volunteer doctor Dr Audrey Tan from *Medicins Sans Frontieres* (MSF, also known as *Doctors Without Borders*) give a talk about her intense one-year stint in Kunduz, Afghanistan.

Attendees rounded off the convention with a convivial dinner and lucky draw for a pair of Apple AirPods at the social

night, amid much joy and laughter among newfound friends. We would like to thank all participants and guests for making this event memorable and the TriMedSoc Alliance for their hard work.

We look forward to the the next SMA NMSC, and hope to see you there! ♦

Legend

1. Faculty and student panellists from the three medical schools having a lively discussion
2. A practical demonstration of suturing techniques
3. Participants learning how to apply a backslab on the leg
4. The TriMedSoc Alliance presents Prof Kenneth Mak with a token of appreciation

We thank the many educators and professionals who set aside their precious time to share their wisdom with the participants.

Prof Kenneth Mak	Dr Ian Koh	Akshay Padki
Dr Gerard Bong	Dr Jonathan Koh	Dr Clement Sim
A/Prof Chen Zhi Xiong	Lai Yu Ming	Dr Audrey Tan
Cheong Wei Lun	Adj Asst Prof Leow Wei Qiang	Asst Dean Emmanuel Tan
Adj A/Prof Angie Chew	Dr Vanessa Lim	Camelia Tang
Dr Ken Chua	Dr Jarret Ng	Dr Alex Xie
Dr Ignasius Jappar	Dr Ong Eng Koon	Dr Edwin Yang
Prof Khoo Xiao Juan	Dr Ong Thun How	Dr Yap Leong Gen

