

BROADENING PERSPECTIVES

Through Learning Exposure Trips

Text by Sharmilah Banu, Executive, SMA Charity Fund

At the SMA Charity Fund (SMACF), we believe that every medical student should have the opportunity to learn, grow and contribute to the future of healthcare, regardless of financial circumstances.

Through our Learning Exposure Trips initiative, financially challenged medical students are given opportunities to broaden their horizons, deepen their medical knowledge and gain valuable international exposure that may otherwise be beyond their reach.

One student who recently benefited from this initiative is Ryan Tan Zi Lin, a medical student from the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Nanyang Technological University. With support from SMACF, Ryan attended the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, USA, which is one of the world's leading conferences for eye and vision research.

At the conference, Ryan presented his research on diabetic retinopathy, a diabetes-related eye disease that can lead to vision loss if left untreated. His project explored the use of advanced retinal imaging technology capable of capturing a significantly wider field of view of the retina, allowing researchers to identify disease biomarkers across a larger area of the eye. Such innovations could contribute to earlier detection and improved monitoring of diabetic eye disease.

Beyond presenting his own work, Ryan attended numerous research presentations and poster sessions covering a wide range of ophthalmology

subspecialties. The experience gave him a broader appreciation of the field and the collaborative nature of medical research. The conference also exposed Ryan to different models of healthcare delivery and highlighted the importance of multidisciplinary care. One project that particularly stood out to him examined how allied health professionals could support the surveillance of age-related macular degeneration through virtual retina clinics.

Ryan shared that presenting his research to an international audience helped him recognise the value of his own work and its potential impact on patient care.

For SMACF, stories like Ryan's demonstrate the transformative impact that educational opportunities can have on aspiring healthcare professionals. Beyond supporting students' attendance at conferences, Learning Exposure Trips help future doctors gain international perspectives, develop professionally

and build the confidence needed to contribute meaningfully to Singapore's healthcare landscape.

By investing in medical students today, SMACF hopes to nurture a future generation of compassionate, capable and globally connected healthcare professionals who will continue to strengthen healthcare for the communities they serve. ♦

To learn more or to donate to our cause, please visit <https://www.smacf.org.sg> or reach out to us at smacf@sma.org.sg.



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I am truly thankful for the opportunity to attend this conference. Being able to expose myself to an event like this has truly benefited me immensely.”

- Ryan Tan Zi Lin, medical student, LKCMedicine

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