

SYPT: Not Another Exercise Regime

By Dr Yao Fengyuan

What exactly is SYPT?

Singapore Young Psychiatrists and Trainees (SYPT) is a section of the Singapore Psychiatric Association. The SYPT was founded in 2006 by a group of idealistic and motivated young psychiatrists led by Dr Mok Yee Ming, who believed that having an organisation that represented the trainees could help reach out across individual institutions, and create bonds and friendships. The founding members hoped that by creating this group, trainees could have a sense of group identity and feel like part of something greater than just being a trainee. Currently, members of SYPT comprise all psychiatric trainees and junior doctors who are interested in Psychiatry. At every annual general meeting, the trainees elect a management committee to run the operations of SYPT. The specific tasks of the SYPT management committee are determined by the needs of the trainees.

How does SYPT work?

For the first few years, due to segregation of the trainees between the SingHealth and National Healthcare Group clusters, the main focus was to bring the trainees together through camaraderie, such as organising social gatherings for them to meet in relaxed environments. In recent years, the focus has shifted to providing useful training for trainees who are taking postgraduate examinations. For example, SYPT has been organising Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) trainings regularly for trainees taking the MMed examination. Trainees who are not taking the examination will volunteer to be actors for each OSCE

station. This helps to bring trainees together as they can help each other and receive training at the same time.

This year, the SYPT management committee organised the Young Psychiatrist Track in the Associations of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) psychiatric congress, which was held locally in mid-November. The ASEAN meeting is usually held in Singapore once every ten years. Although the activities of SYPT vary from time to time, our vision remains the same – to build a close-knit psychiatric community, whereby fellow trainees and future specialists can work together closely and support one another for the benefit of both the doctors and patients.

Why choose Psychiatry?

For most diseases, there is no cure. Our role as doctors is to at least provide comfort for our patients. In Psychiatry, I get to talk to people (I believe I have more opportunities to do so in Psychiatry than other medical disciplines) and look into their emotional needs. I personally find Psychiatry very fulfilling in this aspect – I can at least provide some comfort for the patient by simply empathising with and listening to them.

The more I talk to the patients, the more I learn about life. I have learnt about the different backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles of people, which are often very interesting. I have also learnt how interpersonal difficulties arise, and how to avoid or manage them.

I have to also incorporate general knowledge about life in Singapore to be able to come to an accurate diagnosis, which I find interesting and challenging at the same time. For example, when I assess a patient for dementia, I need to know roughly how rice is cooked and how bills are usually paid to assess the executive functioning of the patient. When assessing a patient who tells me he has two wives, usually a delusion (an untrue, unshared and unshakeable belief), I have to ask him if he is legally married to both

wives to examine the plausibility of his statement, since only monogamy is allowed in Singapore.

Why is Psychiatry an attractive discipline?

Much more attention has been paid to mental health for the past few years, as the Government and the public are starting to realise the burden of the mental illnesses on society. The National Mental Health Blueprint was put in place in 2006 to support the setting up of various psychiatric services to boost mental healthcare. The media has also devoted efforts to promote mental health and destigmatise mental illnesses. Hence, there are a lot of opportunities for the development of a fulfilling career in the field of Psychiatry.

The working environment is also one of the factors to consider when choosing a field to specialise in. I personally cannot endure the “polar” temperatures in the operating theatre. Although there are disturbed patients who act out sometimes, they are usually restrained or kept in a safe environment before doctors get to interview them. In Psychiatry, doctors also work less in isolation – there are a lot of opportunities for collaboration with the nursing staff and allied healthcare personnel to manage each patient holistically.

If you are a doctor who enjoys patient contact and working with people, Psychiatry is an exciting and fulfilling discipline to specialise in. **SMA**



Dr Yao Fengyuan is a registrar working in the Institute of Mental Health. He is also the Chairman of SYPT 2012. He shares SYPT's vision: to strengthen the relationship of all trainees through the activities of SYPT, so that future psychiatrists can work hand in hand with each other and not in isolation. He also hopes SYPT can be a voice for the trainees to express their training needs.

Good training and good working relationships can ultimately improve the quality of care for the patients.

Management committee of SYPT 2012

