

A Physician's Guide to Finding

Love

within the Medical Profession

By Dr Jonathan Tan, Editorial Board Member,
and Dr Gillian Lim



Introduction

Seeking a life partner is nature's way of ensuring that our lineage is carried on. It is also important because it makes securing a caregiver and coming up with a discharge plan a lot easier – especially when you get that total knee replacement after years of walking around in the hospital. However, being a doctor does put you at certain disadvantages when you are trying to accomplish this. Your intimate knowledge of the causes of hyponatraemia does not make for scintillating dinner time conversation. And years without sunlight, exercise and sufficient sleep makes for a rather pasty, unattractive bunch of people.

But do not fret or stop doing that research your boss told you to do and hit the gym. There is someone out there who will consider your obsession with pasting stickers onto syringes cute or not be grossed out by your collection of diabetic foot pictures. It is time to consider dating another medical professional!

Why another medical professional? Besides the obvious perks of co-sharing parking benefits and SMA subscriptions, the wonders of finding a special someone, who understands your strange work hours and who will see your “urgent” blue letter consults, is not to be underestimated.

So even if you get a panic attack every time you step



beyond the gates of your hospital, these are some ways you may be able to snag that pretty/handsome colleague of yours, and avoid those awkward questions next Chinese New Year (CNY).

Medical school – the pre-clinical years

Learn to dance

Send hearts aflutter by expertly pulling off a dance routine during Rag and Flag.

It was statistically proven in a cohort study conducted by two bored medical students that 20 intra-faculty couples were minted after the orientation camp of 2003. For guys, this may be the peak of your physical fitness. If ageing is a kyphogenic process, medical school is a lipogenic one. Don't let two left feet get in your way.

Take notes, or print them

But what if you can't dance, or pretend to be brave during orientation? Then it is time to get to know your photocopy shop auntie well. That stack of notes from seniors may be the key to winning that special someone's heart. Many a relationship was born when gazes met under the flashing lights of the photocopyers.

Choose your councilor/councillee well

Deciding on this sacred bond may be the start of something special. Provide your crush with a sense of security and comfort by displaying your capacity to memorise branches of key blood vessels, exhibiting proficiency in the Latin names of strange microorganisms, and sharing stories of surviving end-of-year examinations. Somehow, knowledge of medical material makes you boyfriend material.

Medical school – the clinical years

It's all about the tutorials

Senior medical students are known for their insatiable appetite to devour textbooks and clinical practice guidelines by the dozens. Offers of extra tutorials, personal study notes,

recommendations of good clinical cases to clerk, may be all it takes for you to attain lifelong happiness. Do note that based on retrospective studies, there is more evidence of success for pairings involving male doctors and female medical students.

It's all in the song and dance

Nope, we are not referring to Rag and Flag dance moves. The girls have grown up and instead, what would impress them now are your slick clinical examination skills and ability to rattle off your findings as though you were William Osler reincarnated. So grab that stethoscope and neuro-kit. It's time to start brushing up.

The house officer (HO) years

Adversity breeds romance

Sleepless nights, early days and skipped meals do not seem like the usual setting in which romance blossoms. Comfortable footwear and clothing, along with spectacles, take precedence over looking good for the opposite gender. However, sleep deprivation can lead to delirium and now is the time to try your luck with that person who was totally out of your league.

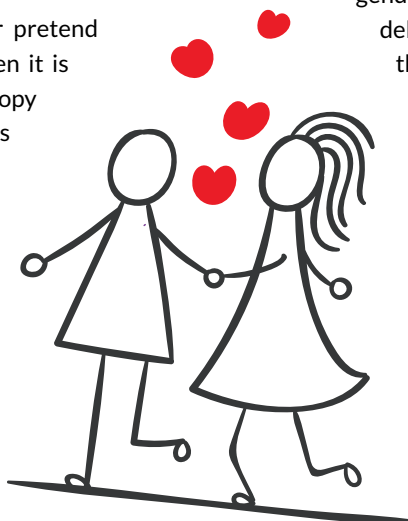
Throw in an offer to set a plug, clerk a case or *dabao* lunch, and it's anyone's guess what might happen...

Don't limit yourself

Contrary to what Grandma told you last CNY, you don't have to marry a doctor. It's time to look outside the 200 people in your batch and cast your net far and wide. As a good doctor, it's time to explore and get to know your multidisciplinary team better.

Don't take that old *ah gong* for granted

You may not know this, but looking after vulnerable age groups may be how you can bridge the gap between medical professionals. That 90-year-old gentleman down with a urinary tract infection and hip fracture may be the conversation starter between you and a nurse/physiotherapist/occupational therapist/speech therapist/podiatrist/pharmacist/geriatric medicine medical officer (MO)/internal medicine MO/psychiatry registrar, etc, especially if you are a surgical HO.





The medical officer years Watch out for the fashion show

Out comes the makeup, dresses, heels and stylish bags that turn heads as female MOs leave behind the scrubs and thick glasses of yesteryear. Their male counterparts, decked in well-tailored shirts, leather shoes and strategically tousled hair, win the hearts of nursing sisters and

canteen aunts throughout local hospitals. It is under such pheromone-enriched circumstances that many successful pairings are formed.

Back in green

The two years back in green for the Singaporean MOs lead to two distinct phenomena. For some, it is time to marry that girl you fell in love with studying for that Biochemistry test all those years ago and endure gatecrashing games with a medical twist. For others though, the army years are a traumatic period. While you are stuck dealing with psychosomatic complaints of army boys, your sweetheart is being charmed by her dastardly registrar at work. And how can you compete? So what if you know about the foramen of Winslow? He has actually operated there. Heck! He even claims to have done the Pringle manoeuvre before. Setting plugs on army boys just can't compete.

The registrar years

Turnabout is fair play

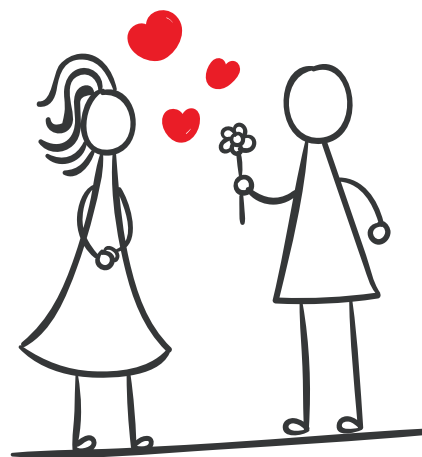
Lost your sweetheart when you were in National Service? It's now time to start offering tutorials and take your MOs through their first central venous pressure line insertion. But with close supervision and an after action review, of course. And remember that sleep-deprived HO on call? It was rumoured that in the past, an offer to set a plug or clerk a case for a HO by the registrar on call was equivalent to a firm declaration of interest.

Blue letter, love letter

Sure, answering inter-department referrals can be a chore. But for a well-written blue letter, why don't you personally commend that HO on his/her penmanship? Better yet, while that 100-year-old lady with multiple medical co-morbidities may not be a good candidate for surgery, the MO or registrar referring the case may be the candidate you are looking for.

The consultant years Don't make Grandma worry

The hints during CNY are getting less subtle. Your colleagues are starting to look askance at you when you declare your preference for retrograde nailing during trauma rounds and your well-meaning senior consultant has given up on trying to matchmake you. If singlehood and the freedom to write that paper, be that clinician educator, or even start up that new clinical service is what brings you satisfaction; there is no need to give in to societal pressure and get attached. However if you realise that you are finally ready to stop turning down all those yearning glances, it's never too late to meet that right person. Put on that black tag and go forth. Grandma is not getting any younger.



Conclusion

With enough potential "social mixers" to make even the Social Development Network proud, perhaps we should all take heart that love may happen when we least expect it. Who knows? The next "arrow" you get – to cover your consultant's clinic/give medical students a lecture/see that extra blue letter – may very well belong to Cupid. ■



Jonathan and Gillian are currently in the middle of their residency training in orthopaedic surgery and psychiatry respectively. They are ever grateful to their matchmaker cum SMA News Editor, Dr Tan Yia Swam, who organised their blind date at Bishan Park. The couple enjoy watching the Lord of the Rings films (Jonathan especially), cooking together and babysitting little kiddies whenever they can.

2-for-1 SMA Spouse Membership

If you and your spouse* are both medical doctors eligible for SMA membership, only one of you need to pay membership fees as spouse membership is a complimentary lifelong scheme!

If you wish to apply for spouse membership or convert your membership type, please visit <http://www.sma.org.sg/membership> or contact us at membership@sma.org.sg for more details.

*A copy of your marriage certificate is required for verification.