

MEDICAL EXPERT WITNESS TRAINING 2016:

It's a Wrap!

The **Medical Expert Witness Training 2016** is a joint collaboration between the Academy of Medicine, Singapore; the Law Society of Singapore; Singapore Academy of Law; the SMA and the State Courts of Singapore. The overwhelming response resulted in all 60 vacancies being filled within two weeks from the first announcement. The faculty comprised a team of 25 trainers, including five district judges, 11 lawyers and nine doctors.

The training was held over the span of two Saturdays — 19 March and 9 April 2016, at the Academia and the State Courts, respectively. The sessions were planned three weeks apart as all trainees had to write and submit a medical expert report based on their assigned role (plaintiff or defendant expert). Each report was then marked by one district judge, two lawyers and one doctor, and returned to the trainees prior to the role play segment on Day 2.

Day 1 of the training commenced with an opening address by Justice Quentin Loh, who gave a frank description of the challenges of a medical expert. Thereafter, a multiple-choice question quiz was conducted through an audience response system. Lectures were carefully crafted to help trainees understand their role as a medical expert witness and to also prepare them for the role play segment. The topics covered include the *Role of Medical Experts*; *Instructions and Writing an Expert Report*; *Preparing for Court & Professional Issues* and *Testifying in Court — What to Expect and Courtroom Skills*.

Day 2 began with a discussion led by the trainers, on the common pitfalls in

the expert reports. The trainees then moved to their respective court rooms for role playing. Each court room held 12 trainees and four trainers (which consisted of a district judge, plaintiff lawyer, defendant lawyer and doctor). Trainees praised this segment for being realistic and the immediate feedback on their performance during oral testimony was helpful and constructive. Although only 30 trainees were selected to take the "hot seat" at the witness stand, observing trainees picked up useful skills as well. The training concluded with a debrief session.

All trainees shared their experiences and agreed that a medical expert witness's role involves good writing, reasoning and presentation skills; and having thorough preparation and practice was the key to being a good medical expert. The trainees also acknowledged the importance of good medical experts in the dispensation of justice in medical disputes and almost all were willing to carry out their responsibilities as medical experts when called upon to do so. Furthermore, the trainees came to appreciate the work of lawyers and their skills in court craft when advocating for their clients.

We would like to thank all the district judges from the State Courts and the lawyers from the Law Society for being enthusiastic and forthcoming in sharing their expertise. This training would not have been possible without the support and commitment of all the five collaborating parties led by the Singapore Academy of Law. ♦

PROFILE

TEXT BY

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Legend

1. (From top to bottom): Lawyers, Mr Lek Siang Pheng, Ms Kuah Boon Theng and Mr Edmund Kronenburg covering their respective topics for the seminar.
2. Mingling before the start of the seminar (from left to right): Mr Eusuff Ali, Mr Gregory Vijayendran, Dr T Thirumoorthy, Justice Quentin Loh, Dr Sayampanathan and Dr Wong Tien Hua

