

CHOOSING A MEDICAL SCHOOL

It is a privileged position to have a choice of medical schools. This was one of the most challenging and life-changing decisions I had to grapple with. I chose medicine because I could not conceive of another profession in which science and humanity converge in such a spectacular fashion. This coalescence of contrarities resonates strongly with who I am and it was not by chance that this was also the basis on which I chose my medical school, the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKC Medicine).

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

It was a difficult decision. I spoke at length with my parents and seniors, but no two people experience medical school in the same way. So I pondered over what I wanted from my medical school experience and what kind of doctor I hope to become. I wanted to be an articulate thinker, with a sharp mind and the respectful means to speak it. I also wanted to be a keen team player and a humble leader because team-based medicine is the patient's best hope. I asked myself what it would take to make my life one that is well lived, and in reply, I just wanted to touch lives. Pulling these threads together, LKC Medicine's curriculum, pedagogy and mission to advance the science and practice of medicine for the good

of humanity collectively seemed best poised to help me make my goals and dreams a reality.

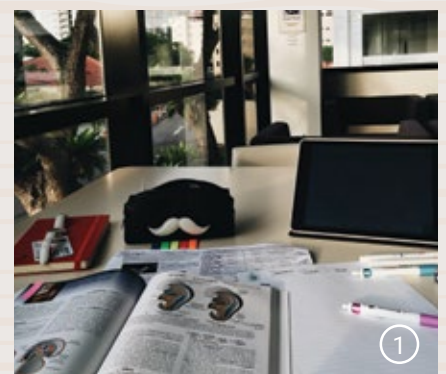
HANDS-ON TEACHING PEDAGOGY

Humanity in medicine is emphasised from day one. Through various programmes, such as the fortnightly Integrated Clinical Practice sessions, where we learn to communicate with patients, the Hospital Week where we experienced a patient's journey and the Long-Term Patient Project (LTPP), where we followed a patient over two years, I have learnt much about the idiosyncratic human aspect of medicine from our patient encounters. *No two patients suffer in the same way. Empathy is a deliberate, concerted effort we make to get into the patient's state of heart or mind.* Notably, of all the lessons I have learnt, my LTPP patient taught me that with courage, hope and passion for something that is greater than ourselves, we may yet make a meaningful existence.

The rigour of Team-Based Learning (TBL) provides a robust system for learning. During TBL sessions, we are constantly engaged. Multiple checkpoints throughout each session help us to build a good foundation of pre-clinical concepts and give us early

exposure to clinical case vignettes. This goes a long way in helping us to understand and remember the concepts better. Through the range of questions we encounter in TBL, we are constantly pushed to think critically and articulate clinical reasoning. This is intentionally so, to help us become thinking doctors in the future. In this way, we are not just going through the motions – we truly understand and learn.

Furthermore, systems-based teaching provides us with a clear, coherent understanding of each body system. I am not an educator, but from a student's perspective, everything ties in very well when we learn by systems. This fuller, richer picture allows us to appreciate the interplay of different disciplines – anatomy, physiology, pathology – within a system, and its clinical implications.



FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Our timetable, in the pre-clinical years, is very flexible. We enjoy latitude and independence in scheduling our own pre-TBL preparation study time, accommodating students with different learning styles and speeds. We can study at our own pace, which allows us to pause and rewind, or look up any concepts that we are confused about. This ensures that we understand the concepts properly before moving on so that we do not postpone our learning, as students are wont to do when hurried through a series of lectures. Medicine is a steep learning curve, so it is imperative that we really learn, and in a less stressful environment to boot.

This flexibility also grants us time and space to pursue other interests alongside our medical education. Whether our interests lie in community service, sports, the arts or research, we have ample time to explore and enjoy these activities. As a new school, students have plenty of opportunities to develop new initiatives and see their ideas set in motion. The only limit is our imagination and the willingness to turn dreams into plans.

On the other hand, medicine can be heavy going, so I appreciate the space and freedom to take a proper break and balance studying with an equal measure of rest. Personally, I often balance out a heavy morning's worth of studying with a casual evening at the Singapore Botanic Gardens or

a lunch with friends. It is no secret that medical studies is a long and challenging journey. But with kind friends enduring it with me, patient seniors guiding me and wise house tutors advising me, I have come through two demanding but meaningful years, with a stronger love for medicine.

CONCLUSION

At the heart of it, I chose LKCMedicine because I wanted to be brave. Although mine was a thoughtful and considered decision, it still took no small amount of courage to take the road less travelled. As I have taken up the challenge myself, I now challenge prospective students to choose a medical education that will help them grow as a person and develop into a thinking and compassionate doctor. This holistic, integrated learning experience has indeed challenged me intellectually, mentally and emotionally. Every aspect of the LKCMedicine curriculum is designed to humanise medicine. I am constantly reminded that my patients and I share in a common humanity, yet remain aware of the distinctiveness of each individual patient. When I look around me, these are the future doctors that I would like caring for me. Like many of my peers, I had a choice; I chose LKCMedicine and I have not regretted it. As it is in life, there is no way of knowing what could have happened had I taken another path any more than I can predict the future. But right here and now, I am in the best place to help me become the kind of doctor I want to be. ◆

PROFILE



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY

REBEKAH LEE

Rebekah Lee is an LKCMedicine Class of 2019 student who is thankful for the privilege of living her dream. Be it history, literature or medicine, books are her best companions. From Steinbeck to Harrison's, she endeavours to think critically, feel deeply and get a glimpse of why and what we are.

Legend

1. Studying in our medical library in the LKCMedicine heritage HQ building, adjacent to Tan Tock Seng Hospital
2. The Class of 2019
(Source: Project Purple and Silver video, produced by the introDOction 2015 Publicity Committee)

