

By Dr No

15 Types of Medical Students

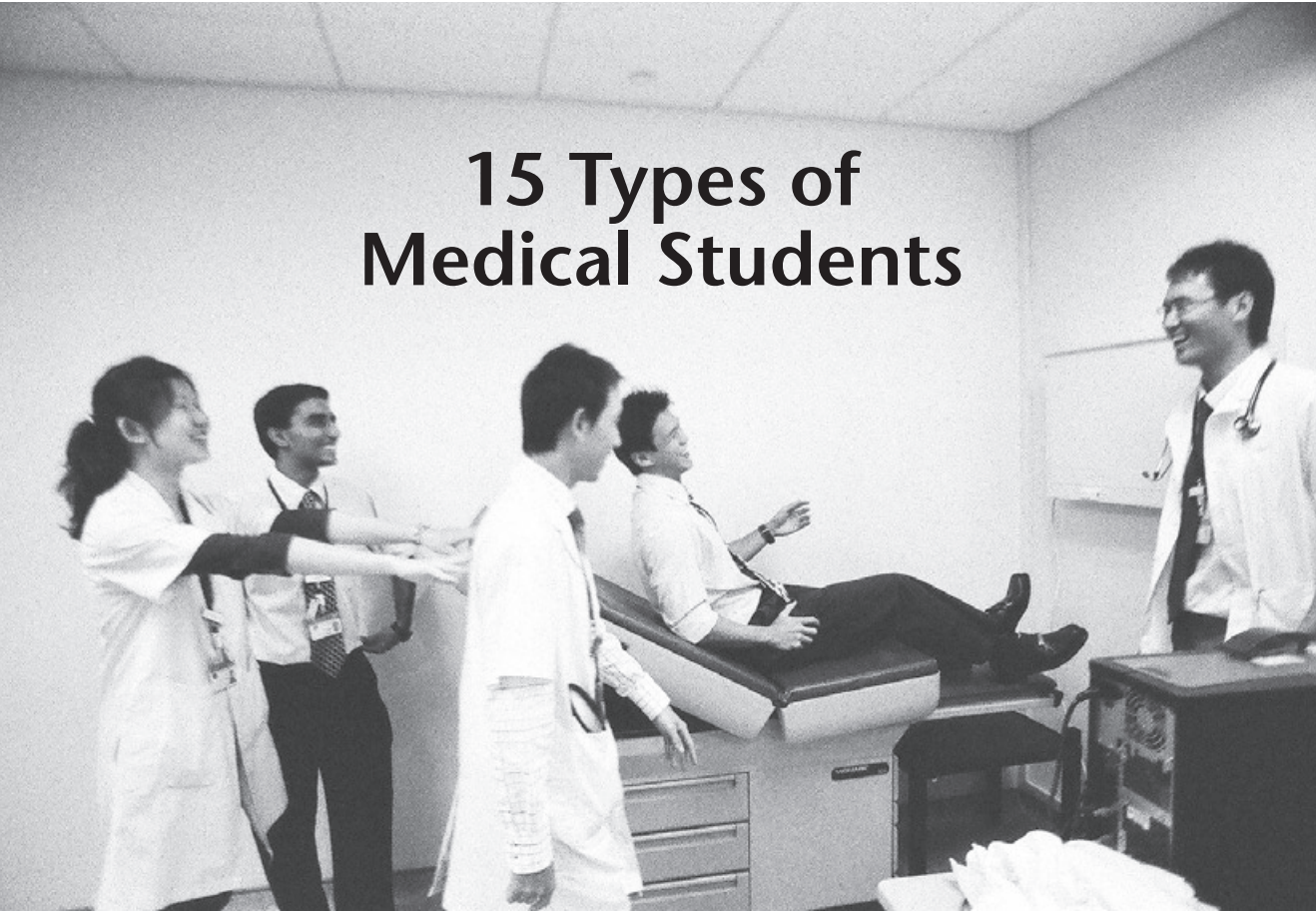


Photo credit: Dr Wong Chiang Yin, Chief Operating Officer, Changi General Hospital

Every profession has its fair share of stereotypes. Some of you might have chanced across a cartoon in the internet called *12 Types of Medical Students*. This article is not a gross reproduction but gives a local flavour. Sample the 15 types of medical students in the local scene:

THE KIASU

This subspecies is a common sight in its white coat and is always happily preparing needles and drip sets. They are famous prowlers and constantly cannibalise the HO species to provide them with cases. Always eager, they can be seen 24/7 waiting for the next baby to deliver or the next patient to clerk. They do not eat, sleep or drink but only require constant night calls to survive. Thriving on histories and examinations alone, they strike fear in patients as they make their approach with a glib tongue that asks the question that cannot be refused, leading to hours of agony. Some of the subspecies are famously known to exhaust their patients so that no other can take a history. Others just camp at the Accident and Emergency Department.

THE OVERLY ACADEMIC

You will recognise this subspecies by the typical look that would characterise most of the intellectually inclined. Do not call them nerds, for it is unseemly in this era of biomedical research and evidence-based medicine. They will question your knowledge and your suitability as a doctor if you do not know your medicine well. They have an air of intellectual superiority, the proud step of arrogance and the temerity to even question the significance of the p-value of the randomised clinical trial quoted by their professors. They snap at the very chairs of these professors, waiting to one day unseat and claim the places for their own. Upon their gigantic craniums, there lie a definitive pair of spectacles and an air of unquestionable wisdom. They used to devour textbooks but for those who have an insatiable appetite, the *New England Journal of Medicine* provides their weekly sustenance. They are also not known for their vanity, for they believe that the brain is the biggest and most beautiful part of the anatomy. Clinical acumen is a boon, though not all possess it. The Overly Academic usually prefers medicine to butchery.

Dr No is a disillusioned fourth year medical zombie. In his free time, he karokes in the toilet and tries to find beauty in this cruel and ugly world.

THE GUNNER

Some people would think that they are part of The Painfully Enthusiastic. But they are different – they tend to be only painfully enthusiastic when posted to the discipline of their choice. Otherwise, they are pretty much the same as the general cohort of medical students. They display clenched fists of determination as well as clenched buttocks of anality. They too love procedures and journal clubs. Unlike The Painfully Enthusiastic who attends and does all these mindlessly, The Gunner, however, goes for these activities to be inspired. You will also find that The Gunner does not suffer the situational linguistic paralysis that plagues the rest.

THE MISSING

The most elusive of them all and the rarest subspecies – not in number but because you do not even spot them. They are famously invisible, only appearing on command or on direct order by the Associate Dean's Office, sometimes the Dean's Office. There is no characteristic feature about them except that they are usually not to be found. Even if they appear, they are either late or arrive to fall asleep. You might find them outside the hospital having recreational activities but they are known to be able to dodge the attendance lists as their signatures magically appear on the lists despite their absence. Perhaps they did visit the hospital after all.

THE WEAK

It comes as a surprise that there should be such a subspecies, for should all medical students not realise that medicine is about blood? Well, The Weak are not just haemophobic. Some just have a very huge vasovagal response. They can be spotted occasionally dropping into the arms of their male colleagues, and for some, into their female colleagues' arms. This loss of consciousness is usually precipitated by either the first anatomy dissection or surgery, sight of blood, perception of pain, delivery, dead body or seeing a forensic pathology dissection. Another subspecies is usually frustrated constantly by the demands of their professors, leading to mental and emotional breakdowns, stress-induced lacrimation, hysterical fits and depression. There will be some who unfortunately are weak academically.

THE QUESTIONABLE ADMISSION

This is a subspecies that usually the doctors recognise. It is characterised by the obvious

inadequacy in medical knowledge. They are more interested in their myriad of extra-curricular activities. Commonly mistaken for The Missing for they do go missing often, but not absent. They are usually invariably the polar opposites of The Overly Academic. Tutorials are impeded by this subspecies. There has been argument about the pathogenesis of The Questionable Admission. Some have suspect values, others are genuinely slow learners, some cannot think on their feet, most are uninterested. Rare are the ones who are just embarrassed to show their intelligence. But most are definitely questionable.

THE SENSITIVE SOUL

The Mother Teresa Subspecies – “I have come to save the world from HIV/cancer and so on.” It is quite hard to differentiate them from psychotic patients as both have delusions of grandeur. They will willingly give \$10 to a COPD patient who needs to buy “coffee”. Not all are that gullible but they can be fearsomely enraged when patient sensitivity is compromised. Usually clashes with The Mindlessly and Heartlessly Painfully Enthusiastic. Willing candidate for non-governmental organisations and Medicine Sans Frontieres, and Chronic Third World Country Medical Aid Helper. They are quite tormented by the sight of suffering and pain, fanatically caring for the patient and even going beyond the bounds of duty. Buddha and Jesus Christ would agree with them taking on the pain in the world on themselves. Some are highly religious and their dedication to serving patients border on fanaticism. These tormented souls thrive on “Thank yous”, low pay and idealism.

THE ONE-TRACK MIND

Usually mistaken for The Gunner. But The Gunner knows what he or she wants while The One-Track Mind knows only one thing and nothing else. The latter is famous for not really trying to excel overall but only excelling in the discipline of choice which is mostly related to surgery, for The One-Track Mind feels that the best way to cure people is to saw off the diseased afflicted part of the body. A significant percentage prefers to just do the bones. This subspecies also has the tendency to not bother about a patient's other medical conditions, unless they significantly affect their marks in the extremely anal-retentive must-know-every-single-syndrome medicine/geriatrics/paediatrics postings. In the adult world, they only care about how to ensure that

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diabetic patients can be shunted to medical wards so that their surgical wards are free of long-staying patients, on the pretext of “I do not know how to treat the disease.” For some of these doctors, the pretext is unfailingly true.

THE JUVENILE

Mistaken for The Weak at times. This is not a student who will only crumble under pressure or faint on sight. Also congenitally has a high vasomotor tone, prone to blushing and being embarrassed. Some pee or pass motion in their pants. Has a tendency to ask silly questions and would also frustrate the examiners. Classically related to encounters of the opposite sex, specifically guys in breast/O&G clinics and girls in urology/hernia clinics. Classical triad of blushing, silence/stammer and trepidation. Frequently insulted by consultants who tell the student to not forget the patient’s own nakedness and awkwardness before the disappearance of the triad. Also pathologically afraid of per rectal examinations or any contact with bodily secretions, blood notwithstanding.

THE SLACKER

A bipolar version of The Gunner. This subspecies is famous for falling asleep in school or sometimes going missing in the day, but still getting their distinctions despite minimal studying. There really should be an EEG study of their sleep cycles for abnormal intense brainwave activity. Others, however, do not possess the intelligence but still get by. Another similar subspecies is The Joker. He also is a slacker but his predominant energies are concentrated on entertaining and being the life of the CG in the drab surroundings of the hospital. Always pulling pranks on people and getting into the occasional trouble.

THE INSPIRATIONAL

These are the ones who you know are destined to be doctors. Some have blue blood running in their veins. Some are just inspired by medicine. They live and breathe medicine. Characterised by perfect manners, great conduct and superb service. Also has a healthy dose of idealism but in huge contrast to the overly Sensitive Soul, they walk the talk. They are an inspiration to all especially the ones who are Juvenile and Weak, for they are seemingly so confident and unafraid to approach a patient and take a history. In addition, they have other impressive extra-curricular commitments that heighten the level of respect. They do not feel fear and

they ease away patient fears. They give hope and courage to patients to bring them through the last frontier. Some are chronic aid workers too; others, however, wow the world with their humility. This is The Real Slim Shady.

THE JOCK

Famously athletic, and famously slack. Part Slacker but also part Academic. They could not have entered medical school with less than stellar results. Will respond to the call of duty when any intrafaculty, interfaculty or staff versus student games are being held. Quite the sportsman, always participating in some triathlon, marathon or sporting event held on weekends. Always seen with a shoe bag and sometimes, forgoes black leather shoes for comfortable sports wear. Can be spotted in the mornings or evenings around the hospital jogging and never seems to stop. Essentially the typical medical student hunk/babe. Inspires stares from student nurses, who hope that the jock is single and available. Sweat only adds to the desirability. The Jock just oozes pheromones.

THE ARTISTIC

“All the world’s a stage” – and The Artistic loves the tragedies that play out in the hospital. What more with the issues of life, death, suffering and all the kaleidoscope of feelings that mankind has. They say medicine is an art and this sense of idealism inspires the artist in them. Staging plays and always rounding people up for playhouse, they thrive on creativity and are definitely the entertainers in the house. A rare subspecies in this age of scientific medicine, they used to be a lot more common. Sharing the same idealism as the tormented Sensitive Soul, The Artistic is a lot more optimistic and channels negative energies into creativity and works of art.

THE UNSCRUPULOUS

The bad sheep of the flock. They are definitely a Questionable Admission and a bad nut. Usually one of the rarest – a mistake in upbringing and selection criteria – some are motivated by money, others are unmotivated by patients and suffering. Have suspicious values and often sabotage and take advantage of others. Painfully Enthusiastic to a certain extent but if their goals cannot be achieved legitimately, there is always the hook or crook method. Only detectable if they let their guard down.

THE SANE ONE

Quits Medical School. ■