

A Time for Reflection: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

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Photos courtesy of Lie Tjen Sin, MS1, Duke-NUS, Class of 2013



As the Duke-NUS class of 2013 sits attentively in the classroom trying to make sense of a complicated electrocardiography (ECG), thoughts of Christmas and the New Year begin to dance around in everyone's heads. Looking around the class, we see three students in deep thought. Hmmmm.... Let's peer into their minds and see what they are reflecting upon.



Kenneth and I are on the right side of the picture.



During a team lead session, hard at work.

JASON: I can't believe I am living the dream of becoming a physician and that I have "survived" half of the first year! Even though there were periods of sleep deprivation, these were fixable by an endless supply of coffee. I was always taught that nothing in the world worth having comes easy! Although this will be my first snow-less winter and being a

Canadian who is still trying to get used to the heat, I am very happy that I have chosen Duke-NUS as the institute to further my education. I need to be in a field that is dynamic, challenging, as well as exciting and rewarding – so far so good! The programme has really exceeded my expectations. I am very thrilled to learn new things every single day: distinguishing obstructive jaundice from a laboratory report, working in teams while learning from others who come from very diverse backgrounds, or just hanging out with my new and exciting friends while discovering Singapore. I am having the time of my life!

Hmmmm.... Looking at the scar on my right arm, I am reminded of why I entered medicine in the first place. I was role-playing in kindergarten and “leaping across buildings” when I fell off the ledge of the sofa and broke my arm. I spent five months of recovery and physiotherapy at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and still remember till this day the great dedication, warmth and comfort that the physicians and medical staff there provided me. I felt that these physicians and surgeons not only repaired my broken

arm but also provided me with additional curiosity, awe and a fascination for the world of medicine.

Looking around this classroom, I know everyone has his or her special story on what inspired him/her to enter this career. It feels as if we are a mini “United Nations” as I have classmates from USA, Singapore, China, India, Canada, South Korea and many other countries, all who came to promote changes in medicine. Even though we are a new school, the sky is the limit of what we can offer to the local and global community! Well I feel very inspired right now that I know that “the future is anything I want it to be!” I really love how our classes are community-active: some of us went to KK Hospital to spread some Halloween cheer to the children, and we also raised money for Run For Hope 2009 held in November. Our classes were even co-winners in the annual Quintessential Dance Competition 2009. I know I am involved in something really special and I can't wait to make many more memories here at Duke-NUS as I undergo my journey as a medical student!



Faculty and classes of 2011, 2012 and 2013 ran 4km or 10km for charity.



A community service project involving YLLSoM and Duke-NUS students; a camp for children where one of their parents may have had, is receiving treatment, or has passed away from cancer.



5 faculties including Duke-NUS had a dance competition. Duke-NUS and the NUS Faculty of Dentistry were co-winners



KENNETH: When I was a student at Anglo-Chinese Junior College, I never thought that I would ever take up medicine as a career! My interests lay elsewhere; I wanted to see the world, get a PhD in theoretical research, and live the glamorous life of a globe-trotting virus hunter in search of epidemics to defeat. And so, with a spring in my step that could only have come from collecting my pink identity card from the Ministry of Defence, I flew off to the frozen mid-western city of Chicago to get started on my education. During my undergraduate years at the University of Chicago, I became more involved in the twin fields of microbiology and immunology, and was especially interested where both areas of expertise met: in the battlefields of host-pathogen interaction. It was then that I decided to adjust my plans and obtain an MD-PhD double degree rather than a pure PhD, as it would allow me more flexibility in studying infectious diseases in the context of a human infection.

And boy... school has been *intense*, and it feels like we have already come so far. However, we've also done more than just study. We kicked off the school year with a mini-orientation and dinner to welcome our new international friends to Singapore (and teach them how to use the MRT system). Before

the jetlag had subsided, we were already ploughing through classes and getting ready for our White Coat Ceremony – a symbolic entrance for us into the medical profession as we transitioned from ivory tower academics into the "real world practice" of our chosen field. The already-impressive celebration during the White Coat Ceremony was soon outdone by the even bigger party thrown for the official opening of our new Khoo Teck Puat Building. I remember being quite impressed by the extensive list of dignitaries from the numerous agencies and organisations which have contributed to the setting up of our school. For us, it was a chance to meet some of them, and swap stories on how we became involved in this new and adventurous undertaking in medical education. No doubt our neighbours across the road at Singhealth also took note of the dinner arrangements during the opening ceremony, for when the month of October came, the various departments of Singhealth's sprawling Outram campus came together to commemorate Oktoberfest (in typically Bavarian fashion, with too much beer being imbibed all at once).

The presence of so much non-academic activity going on is unfortunately, extremely misleading – because by far the overwhelming

majority of our time is (and will continue to be) spent studying frantically, late into the night, in preparation for our daily quizzes and tests. Most of the time, it feels like we are barely able to keep up with the deluge of material we have to cover within the next 24-hour cycle. The reward for all this hard work, however, is going into the practice course, or following our instructors into the wards, where we get to appreciate the importance of what we study and put our newfound knowledge to good use!



Beer drinking competition. The winning team: Duke-NUS.



Trick or treating around KKH

medical students' mailbox

MARYANNE: My love affair with the medical profession started early – I had received a toy stethoscope and first aid kit for my sixth birthday, and I haven't looked back since. My undergraduate education in National University of Singapore (NUS), as well as a short stint in University of California Davis further deepened my desire to do medicine. A quote from a former lecturer was a watershed moment for me – “When the science is robust, the cure is imminent.”

Although I have only spent close to half a semester in Duke-NUS, it has felt like a much longer time. Between the late nights studying and the various tests, exams and functions we have had, school has been a tiring albeit fruitful time.

The very first thing that crosses my mind when I think of the new year (and I think I speak for effectively all my classmates as well), is the short three-week holiday we get towards the end of December and start of January. After going through every single day of school with at least one assessment (Ok I lie. There were two rare days in which we did not have a test!), a nice long break will do wonders to rejuvenate and lift our overworked spirits.



Maryanne holding the wine glass.

But as much as I look forward to catching up on long lost sleep and going through days without having to flip open Guyton and Moore, a part of me is still excited about the next half of the school year. Maybe it's guilt stemming from not studying. Perhaps it's the conditioning that we have been put through. But if you ask me, I think it's most likely down to the fact that in an absolutely objective sense, I do enjoy school; not just the moments where my team mates and I find out we answered the tough question on our team assessment correctly, or the times where we get free food from the ever so generous Student Affairs' Department. School has been enjoyable so far because of the company. My classmates have truly been an amazing bunch, and working with people that you gain

insight from everyday has been a very humbling and rewarding experience.

Besides school to look forward to, the various community service projects the class of 2013 and our seniors have planned will also be a highlight for the second half of the year, Camp Simba being one of them. The inaugural camp was held last year, and its objective is to provide children whose parents have or have had cancer with a two-day retreat experience. Camp Simba is jointly organised by Duke-NUS and our peers over at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, and provides us with the perfect opportunity to get to know and collaborate with our future colleagues.

In addition, some of us have been hard at work honing our singing skills as we will be carolling at St Joseph Hospice in December. Yet another one of our school-wide community service projects in the pipeline is the overseas trip to a Burmese migrant school in Thailand next year.

As I flip through the calendar for next year, I am indeed overwhelmed with the amount of things we have to do – readings, meetings, volunteering sessions and so on. But that is exactly what makes school worth going to, and I cannot wait to start 2010 with my peers. **SMA**

POP... Suddenly the lecturer for the day asks if there are any questions and the three students are back to reality!
Happy holidays everyone and we will see you in the New Year!