

# Reflections

## Part I

By Ong Wen Chong

It was my second time attending the SMA Annual Dinner as a representative of the National University of Singapore (NUS) Medical Society. I still clearly remember the frank and thought-provoking speeches that both Dr Tan Cheng Bock and then SMA President Dr Chong Yeh Woei delivered during the 52nd SMA Annual Dinner held at the Grand Hyatt last year. In one night, my mind was immensely broadened and that helped me to reflect more deeply on our local healthcare scene as a future member of Singapore's medical community. Since then, I have had the opportunity to meet up with both of these great men, and their courage and fierce passion have left a lasting impact on me.

This year, the 53rd SMA Annual Dinner had been expanded and was held at an impressive ballroom at Marina Bay Sands, with Mr Lee Kuan Yew himself gracing the event. The NUS Medical Society was grateful to have received two tables for the dinner and we filled them with 20 medical students from both the current and immediate past Executive Committees of the NUS Medical Society.

As the dinner began, Dr Toh Han Chong did a good job of creating a joyful atmosphere as the emcee. We were then introduced to the 53rd SMA Council led by SMA President A/Prof Chin Jing Jih, witnessed the presentation of SMA awards, and listened to speeches by A/Prof Chin and Mr Lee. As I was again looking forward to the speeches, I did not leave disappointed. Firstly, A/Prof Chin delivered a lighthearted, "truncated version" of his welcome address that clearly highlighted the SMA's recent accomplishments and its role and relevance to the Singapore healthcare scene. After receiving the Honorary Membership, Mr Lee delivered an impromptu speech – a candid evaluation of the quality of Singapore's healthcare and a stern reminder of the challenges that we will face in the coming years as a medical community. This is the first time that I have listened to Mr Lee's speaking live and it is definitely an experience to behold, as his strong voice continues to draw the attention and respect of everyone in the room.

Following that, there was also a performance by our very own string quartet from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSoM), led by the charismatic Dominic Seet (Class of 2014), filling the rest of the night with beautiful music.

Of course, there was also the food and people during the night of activities to make it all complete. During the course of the dinner, my committee and I were delighted to meet up with the newly elected Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Student Council, led by Szymon Mikulski, and also various doctors and faculty staff that we have worked with over the year.

Having started the SMA student membership drive just a

# on the SMA Annual Dinner

month before the dinner, we are glad to have over 400 students who have already joined the Association within this short span of time. As future members of Singapore's medical community, I believe that SMA can offer us deeper insights into the workings of our healthcare system through its various initiatives, and also serve as a platform where the students' voices can be heard more loudly among the sea of doctors. In the near future, I hope for greater student activity through SMA, and that our actions can make a difference to healthcare in Singapore. **SMA**

*Wen Chong is a third year student from YLLSoM. He is currently President of the NUS Medical Society.*

## Part 2

By Szymon Mikulski and Esther Low

Yes, we have all heard it before – medical school is only the beginning of a lifelong journey. But any journey, however scenic, can become treacherous, especially when undertaken alone. So as our graduations approach and we prepare to set out into the great outdoors of residency training, we are humbled at how far we still have to go before we become competent doctors. We cannot help but wonder how we will navigate to the right specialties. It is therefore comforting to know that we are not alone after all. Medicine may be a journey, but it is also a team effort, an expedition, if you will, and success lies in following in the footsteps of those who came before us.

Mentors are to medical students what coaches are to sportsmen – indispensable. More than just teachers, effective mentors provide professional and personal guidance, serve as role models and socialise students into the profession. The

question is, how do we find them? In our opinion, good mentors are rarely assigned. Rather, they emerge over time, through repeated personal encounters be it during clerkships, research or other non-academic interactions.

We were therefore honoured to attend the SMA Annual Dinner. The occasion offered a rare chance to connect with doctors outside of the clinical setting, to meet respected figures in the medical profession, and to learn about the vision for healthcare in Singapore and its role in Southeast Asia from the Guest of Honour, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, himself. Seeing Dr Chia Ghim Song, a recent Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School graduate, as a new member of the 53rd SMA Council also struck a chord with the Duke-NUS students. We are sure that all of us left the event feeling inspired and empowered to positively contribute to the profession in our own ways.

By including students in its activities, SMA creates a nurturing environment, which promotes early integration of students into the local medical community. In doing so, not only does it foster the development of mentoring relationships, but also acknowledges the integral role of all clinicians in broad medical education, in line with the principles of academic medicine. We feel encouraged by this initiative and look forward to a continued interaction between SMA and medical students. Let the bonds and partnerships that we forge today, formal or otherwise, be strong and lasting ones. After all, today we may be only setting off on our journey as students, but it will not be long before we are travelling together as colleagues in one team. **SMA**

*Szymon is a third year student from Duke-NUS. He is currently President of the Duke-NUS Student Council.*

*Esther is a second year student from Duke-NUS. She is currently Vice President (Welfare) of the Duke-NUS Student Council.*



Past and present NUS Medical Society Executive Committee members with YLLSoM Dean Prof Yeoh Khay Guan, who is standing, fourth from left (Wen Chong is standing, third from left)



Duke-NUS Student Council members (Esther and Szymon are standing, first and third from right respectively)

YLLSoM photo: Sia Ching Hui (YLLSoM Class of 2012)