

# How to be a Good House Officer

By Dr Tan Yia Swam, Deputy Editor

**C**ongratulations to all our new colleagues who have successfully cleared the MBBS and will finally join us in the workforce! This next year ahead is going to be tough, so here are some tips from our characters to help you make all our lives easier!

## Mr Soh Nott Mi (final year medical student)

“I’m so glad I passed – I knew I could never make it to the Dean’s List, but I’m glad that I didn’t end up on the Dean’s Black-List! I applied through HOPEX – hope I can get my postings of choice. In this time of economic recession, I am so thankful to MOH for giving me a job, and the bond actually lets me keep it for five years! So yes! I will work hard and give everything I have in service of my patients and the hospitals!”

## Dr Lobbo (male houseman who signed up with Hogwash Hospital)

“Ooh, Lobbo is thankful to have been able to complete his housemanship at Hogwash uneventfully, and with several hundred compliment letters from VIP patients – Lobbo hopes to make it into Slide-N-Win ssssoon... Housemen must remember – we are to be seen and not heard... just make sure changes are carried out; the Dementors do not have to know who did them, or how they were done... more details ssshall be revealed only at initiation...”

## Dr Buay Song (disgruntled male HO, younger cousin of Dr Buay Zai See)

“Hah! Stupid Lobbo. He’s a suck-a\*\* idiot. You think he was actually a good houseman? He only knows how to ACT like one – he and his cushy job at Hogwash, where nurses do most of

the changes and he only has to prance around the wards looking busy and curry favour with his Consultants. Where I worked, despite having an ECG technician and a phlebotomist, I was still doing my own work – simply because there was too much work that’s urgent enough for me to get done straightaway, and not wait for others to come around to do it. When I turn MO, I shall continue to work in the patient’s best interest and remind all doctors; housemen or otherwise to do so too!”

## Dr Ai Geef Arp (first year female MO)

“Well... housemanship was tough, but overall I was very lucky to have good colleagues in each posting. We all helped one another to finish the changes and cover post-call work, so we actually managed to get post-call most of the time and go on leave. I think the best advice I can give is to look after one another – one suffer, all suffer – there’s no need and no point in making oneself look good; nobody knows and nobody cares. Word gets around – backstabbers and lazy people are identified during housemanship!”

## Dr Buay Zai See (final year surgical trainee)

“Very simple – tell yourself it is one year of intense on-the-job training. Make it, or quit. Learn all you can, ask questions, step forward to do stuff. Better to look

foolish as a HO now than in later years! Work hard, look after each other, make new friends. The Dean’s Lister in school may be the source of all knowledge, but absolutely hopeless at breaking bad news; conversely, the repeat student may have been bad at grades, but totally awesome at handling difficult relatives. This is the real life – it’s time to grow up and find out what you are made of.”

## Dr Seow Kah Kia (first year surgical registrar)

“Very simple – tell yourself you do not know pain. You do not know fear. You do not have to eat, sleep or pee. You do not need a social life. The team is your family. The Cons are your parents – OBEY them. We are your siblings. Look after the patients as if they are your children. Show no fear to the radiologists or EOT anaesthetists. When asked to get an urgent scan or an EOT slot, DO IT. When demented old folks spit in your eye or pee on your shoes, just finish what you need to and change into another set of *baju*.”

## Ms Kan Chiong Gui (daughter of Mdm See Bay Suay)

“House Officer? Those young kids running around unwashed and haggard all the time? You mean they are real doctors? Initially I wanted only a trained specialist to see my mother. Well... I suppose the ones who looked after my mother were not too bad *lah*; they did manage to take blood quite well... and got neat handwriting. And one was really nice and caring, always answering my questions whenever I accosted him in the corridors; the other one was very jovial, always laughing in a corner. You are sure they are real doctors? So young!”

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### **Madam See Bay Suay (unfortunate female patient)**

“Those young kids running around?

*Wah* they are real doctors *ah!* So young, so clever! I told my daughter to be a doctor, she don't want, now see! Got retrenched – she used to work at some *ang-moh* bank.

I told her, be a doctor and save lives, very noble, sure incur good karma! See, I suffer so much; lucky got many doctors to look after me – the old ones who can do the operation well, and the young ones who are all the *kah-kias* to learn from the teacher. One day if only got young doctors left, then old people like us *see-liao*\*!”

\* die

### **Professor Tua Tao Kay (senior Surgical Consultant at Singapore Fictional Hospital)**

“They should come into OT and learn, not just stay in the ward and surf

youtube. Even if they do not wish to pursue surgery, this is an MBBS degree, so they should know how to stitch at the very least – it is a useful skill in times of emergency to stop bleeding. And to mend any unexpected rips in clothes.”

### **Mister Moe Ree Lax (senior Consultant and HOD of Surgery, Chill-out Hospital)**

“These kids! Poor things. Things have gotten better since my time, but still it's not something I would want my kids to go through! A good houseman just has to stay out of trouble. Be attentive during ward rounds, know the day-to-day changes, and learn something via osmosis during ward rounds. Also, remember to get a life! Life isn't all about bloods and discharge summaries, even though nurses and case managers would have you believe otherwise!”

### **Miss Tan Yia Swam (Medical Officer Specialist in final year of bond)**

“Housemanship is but the beginning. Learn the right stuff, find out how best you function as a doctor and settle eventually into your true calling – as a surgeon, an internist, an administrator, whatever. There will be lots of unpleasant encounters along the way – from patients, their relatives, your colleagues; even your own friends and family! Remember why you came into medicine in the first place, and hold on to that noble ideal. You will meet good seniors and role models along the way, and the occasional patient who showers accolades on you. Take heart from that, and strive on.” **SMA**



*Miss Tan is eager to resume her true calling, but hopes to be able to maintain her other interests. She hopes this won't be the last article from her!*