

# Memories of Medical School



Prof Wong Tien Yin (right) and his younger brother Dr Wong Tien Hua as medical students

*What is your best memory of medical school? SMA News posed this question to doctors, who responded with a whole gamut of answers, from the downright amusing to the utterly terrifying, but all equally memorable in their own ways.*

**R**egistrars who would give tutorials during their calls, the only time they were relatively free. So I remember our clinical group going back to the hospitals at 9 pm, and having lessons then. This reflected the dedication of the many young teachers who gave their time and effort in the public sector to mentor and train us.

Prof Wong Tien Yin

**M**y memories of medical school were made up of three distinct areas:

1. The fun, fraternising and socialising eventually leading to girlfriends and a life partner.  
I started dating when I was in medical school, which must count as late today but was an acceptable social norm in our time. Jams and hops were certainly a new phenomenon along with bulletin boards and chatlines, which were the social media of yesteryear. Before long, I was actually learning to meet real girls instead of the cadavers in our Anatomy hall.
2. The horrendous studying, cramming, failing and taking supplementary examinations (or Res).  
I did not realise how tough curriculum was until the end of the second year when I faced the first professional examinations and failed my Physiology exams. This was a turning point for me, realising I needed to mix the socialising with some proper rules for regular revision of work.
3. The wide range of teachers from the frightening and fearsome to the kind and generally harmless.

To mention all my teachers would be impossible but three stand out, for entirely different reasons. One was our Neuroanatomy lecturer Prof Ling. He was friendly and approachable compared to some of the teachers at the Anatomy department. When we finished our Anatomy classes, one of the clinical groups gave him a t-shirt that read, "I am so AP E.A. Ling". The second was a registrar (who is now a well-known oncologist in private practice) when I was a student and his sarcasm during ward rounds made me shudder to think how students today may respond to his kind of teaching. Finally, the most interesting tutor was one who struck fear in all of us students by his Socratic method of teaching and pushed us hard to read and prepare beforehand just like Prof Kingsley in the television series, *The Paper Chase*.

A/Prof Daniel Fung, Editorial Board Member

**S**pending time studying in the library.

Dr Gary Ang

**M**y memories of medical school are mostly traumatic and have been deeply repressed. The best memory I have is of becoming the proud owner of a real human skeleton. I named the skeleton Johnny and often daydreamed during Anatomy classes about what he was like when alive. Later, some surgical trainees borrowed Johnny and he has been missing in action since then. Please return my best memory to me.

Dr Lim Boon Leng, Editorial Board Member

**W**hen I knew that I had passed, except that quickly turned into depression when housemanship started!

Dr Daniel Wai

**S**crubbing up to assist in the operating theatre (OT).

Dr Bertha Woon

**S**ix suspected appendicectomies scheduled for OT during one medical officer call – all for me.

Dr Chow U-Jin

**P**ostings to Toa Payoh Hospital (TPH) in my third year. Very nice environment. Alas, that is my dream type of hospital, not the very cold, aseptic, clinical new designs which are not so human. I also like Alexandra Hospital, and the very old Singapore General Hospital (SGH) C class wards... that is no-frills medical care.

"Dark-Cloud" (smaforum.org)

**T**rying to decide with my clinical group mates whether the cardiac murmur was end-systolic or mid-diastolic...

Dr Leow Wei Qiang

**W**as it the time when my scalpel first touched skin (albeit cadaveric)? Or the moment my year won the first prize for Playhouse (our medical school inter-year drama competition) for our “artistic” interpretation of Dr Evil (of *Austin Powers* fame)? Maybe it was the time I first set an intravenous line without actually leaving behind some colourfully stained cloth? Or could it have been the instant my eyes locked with a hazel pair of eyes whose owner would eventually constitute my better half? Fondest memory in medical school... tough one this!

P.S. Took me a while to figure out that hazel was actually the colour of contact lenses and not the irises... but it's too late now! :)

Dr Jayant V Iyer, Editorial Board Member

**T**rying to convince uncles not to undress.

Dr Serene Tan

**P**artying at a friend's house after exams (and disturbing the neighbours)!

Dr Lee Chengjie

**S**tudying together with all my friends in the seminar room in the National University of Singapore... in scrubs! And we built a dummy from cardboard to practice examination techniques.

Dr John Hsu

**W**alking into the Anatomy hall for the first time and having lunch immediately after the lesson. :)

Dr Diana Chan

**M**y best memories in med school... CENSORED.

“sfwoo” (smaforum.org)

**T**he Goon Show – every Tuesday afternoon at the old Kandang Kerbau Hospital (KKH).

My clinical group was with Prof Goon. One of my group members was asked to do a vaginal examination. So he described in detail what he had observed and what he had felt and so on. Then he described in detail the cervix, and the uterus too.

The good prof simply said, “Ten kilometres away!”

We were all stunned and did not know what he was saying. My friend still had his gloved finger inside the uterus and was describing it in further detail.

“Ten kilometres away,” the prof shouted at him. “You know what, the uterus is ten kilometres away!!!”

We did not realise the truth of his statement. None of us dared to laugh and we were completely silent – dead silent. The prof continued to repeat, “Ten kilometres away!” We had completely no clue what the good prof was screaming about!

We were then given a lecture on clinical honesty and integrity – a lesson we would remember forever!!! For the patient had a total hysterectomy, and the uterus and cervix were in the morgue museum in SGH!!!

“dodobird” (smaforum.org)

**I** was admitted to hospital for pyrexia of unknown origin and almost the whole class came down to visit me, and a courtship originating from that time led to marital bliss!

“princess” (smaforum.org)

**F**inding and marrying Mrs Lim.

Dr Jeremy Lim, Editorial Board Member

**Q**uite a few unforgettable experiences. One was observing a breast surgeon doing a mastectomy in the OT. And then being told to get the @#% out of his theatre through no fault of ours. (Yes, he used the “F” word.) We were grilled like criminals during tutorials with the same surgeon because we were never good enough.

A good friend recounted a memorable tutorial experience with a urologist, who went round asking questions. He turned to the male students and said, “Okay you! Ejaculate the answer!” When the student did not reply, he turned to the female students and said, “Okay then you! Deliver the answer!”

“AvatarW” (smaforum.org)

**D**uring Anatomy tutorials, we had to hold up the organs and talk about everything about the organ, from location, blood supply, lymphatic supply, the works.

My friends held up the spleen and began, “This is the right spleen. Its blood supply is...” and went on for five minutes. Bravo!

The tutor let him ramble on, then at the end, commented, “So let's hear about the left spleen.”

Stunned and embarrassed, my friend could only blush!

“merry” (smaforum.org)

**W**alking through the halls of the first generation hospitals in Singapore that no longer exist (e.g., TPH, the old KKH and the old Woodbridge Hospital). Though the buildings were old and often run down, they had a lot of character and stories behind them. Does anyone remember the tiny cafe selling nasi lemak at the ground floor of TPH?

Dr Lionel Cheng

“**H**ello, auntie/uncle. We are student doctors. Can we talk to/examine you please?” said in unintelligible Malay/Hokkien/other dialects.

Dr Jack Chan

**W**inning Best Play, Best Costume and Makeup, and Best Stage Design for Playhouse in my fifth year.

Dr Tan Yia Swam, Deputy Editor

**W**e sat around playing bridge the whole day. We also won Playhouse almost every year, and Dr Chong Yeh Woei always acted as the bad guy, like the sorcerer, prisoner, and murderer whose head was chopped off... .

Dr Lee Yik Voon



Dr Chong Yeh Woei (reading book) as a medical student

**W**e, the Class of 1987, won the Dean's Shield for four years out of five. The camaraderie and spirit of the different groups of classmates was something wonderful, because to win the shield we needed to be good at various sports, debate, drama, chess, bridge etc. So we had the different groups all doing their best and contributing to the different areas in order to win the Shield.

Dr Chong Yeh Woei SMA