

Scalpels vs Gavels

Medicine-Law Debate 2012

By Lee Zi Yao, Elizabeth Tan and Sean Tan

The highly anticipated Medicine-Law Debate 2012, the culmination of the Med-Law Games, a week of intense competition between the Medicine and Law faculties of the National University of Singapore, was held in the new MD6 building on 17 February 2012. It was a night of verbal riposte and sparring, in which no prisoners were taken – a fight to the very end.

As the time of the debate drew closer, the auditorium slowly grew packed to the brim, and people had even begun spilling out the back door. The cheers from the floor clearly demarcated the line between the Medicine and Law supporters. After a quick brief of the format of the debate, the emcee began announcing the judges, the Medicine team... and then announced that the Law team was still on its way, much to the disappointment of the audience.

By the time the Law team arrived, fashionably late, the crowd was already beside itself with anticipation, and the excitement in the air was palpable. Shocked exclamations and blurted laughter filled the air as the Medicine team then started with aplomb by unveiling themselves, quite literally, for the night's motion was "This house believes that doctors make better spouses than lawyers". Speaking for the Proposition was the Medicine team, comprising Sanjiv Nair (M2), Sean Tan (M3), and Elizabeth Tan (M3), while speaking for the Opposition was the Law team, Joshua Raj Thomas (Year 3), Gerald Leong (Year 3), and Heidi Tan (Year 2).

Then began a series of speeches filled with sharp wit, mature humour, and a healthy dose of humility for both sides. Team Medicine built their argument around the nature of a doctor's work being better suited for the demands of holy

A full house that evening





Team Law (L to R: Heidi, Joshua and Gerald) arrive fashionably late



A/Prof Paul Ananth Tambyah giving Team Medicine some last minute words of advice



Team Medicine (L to R: Sean, Elizabeth and Sanjiv) are dressed for the occasion



Sean making his speech

matrimony, because doctors communicate better and are more accommodating, in addition to being able to get complete strangers to disrobe in less than five minutes; while Team Law opposed the motion seemingly entirely based on the notion that lawyers were better in bed, replete with innuendos (however subtle they may have been) concerning their oral skills, judicial process and strangely enough, "Swedish meatballs".¹

Sanjiv argued that doctors know their anatomy better, and are fitter because they spend their days dashing around the wards, while all lawyers do is wrestle with the computer mouse. He also claimed that the affable doctors have such good conversational skills that you would even be inclined to share your entire sexual history with them. He concluded his speech by saying, "I have never been prouder to propose!"

Joshua, the first Opposition speaker, countered by saying that lawyers have an imperative to look good as part of their profession, as opposed to wearing scrubs and Crocs like (most people think) doctors always do. His argument then went on to various details of how lawyers were better at coitus including likening the Pre-Trial Process to foreplay, asserting that lawyers know how to try "different positions" and "different angles" before they finally reach a "climax" in court, while doctors just "wash and scrub before they get dirty".

Sean, the second Proposition speaker, said that the qualities of a lawyer, such as being argumentative, destructive and having a killer instinct are not good qualities to have in a spouse. He noted that lawyers tend to "talk and talk and talk" and thus make for boring spouses. Another highlight of the night came when Sean quipped that a lawyer's instinctive response to his partner's proposal for an exciting night would be "I object!"

The second Opposition speaker Gerald refuted Sean's point by saying that lawyers are more fun, particularly because they know how to release their stress by drinking (medical graduates become housemen while law graduates get called to the Bar), and are more accommodating and accepting people (oh yes they said that).

Elizabeth, the third speaker for the Proposition, pointed out that a bad lawyer can make a case drag on for months, but a good one can make it drag on even longer. She also argued that attractiveness can't last forever unless "one is a plastic surgeon, or has easy access to Botox", and that the wedding pledge says "in sickness and in health, not in public law and in free trade".

The third speaker of the Opposition, Heidi, came up and reiterated Gerald's points of how lawyers are more accepting of people. She also said that lawyers do a lot of pro bono work, which makes them "pro boners raging hard in their convictions until they reach the climax of justice!"

Throughout the debate, the auditorium was filled with the sounds of unadulterated amusement and boisterous laughter, with the occasional gasp of disbelief at each particularly audacious remark that the opposing team had dared to make. It ended with both sides thoroughly amused and their thirsts for blood sated.

Scenes from the recent Med-Law Games...

After returning from a period of deliberation in another room, the judges, Mr Mark Gabriel (former secretary of the World Schools Debating Council Executive Committee), A/Prof Terry Kaan (Law), Dr Wong Chen Seong (Medicine), Ms Beulah Li (Law), and Mr Marvin Loh (Medicine), then announced their decision – Team Medicine was awarded the victory and Sanjiv from Team Medicine received the Best Speaker Award.

With this win, Team Medicine has reclaimed our debating crown with an impressive show of wit, and will be raring to return with blazing guns for next year's edition. Team Medicine also recorded triumphs in Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Rugby, Touch Rugby, Netball, Men's Soccer, Women's Floorball and Women's Handball. Overall, Team Medicine claimed the championship for the fifth year running, as well as the Med-Law Challenge Trophy (kindly donated by the immediate past Dean of Medicine Prof John Wong) with an impressive score of 9 - 3 over Team Law. Congratulations to all winners!

We would like to thank the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSoM) Dean's Office and the National University Health System for their generous sponsorship and help, without which this event would not have been possible. Also, to Prof John Wong for his kind donation of the Med-Law Challenge Trophy;² and to Mr Mark Gabriel, A/Prof Terry Kaan and Dr Wong Chen Seong for taking precious time to come down and judge the debate. The team would also like to thank A/Prof Paul Ananth Tambyah for his invaluable help and input. Last but not least, we would like to thank everyone who has had a hand in organising the Med-Law Games, and all participants and supporters involved. **SMA**

Notes

1. Perhaps due to some earlier disagreements arising from our esteemed Law counterparts who attempted to field a certain Swedish exchange student, who was a professional league handball player back in his homeland, in many of the Med-Law Games, without informing us of their intentions to field any exchange students (he was one of the many) or his illustrious background beforehand. These all happened despite the rules set before the start of the games (by the hosting faculty) that exchange students were not allowed to play. He was eventually allowed to play in every game but handball.

2. The previous trophy donated by Dr Vivian Balakrishnan is now sitting permanently in YLLSoM's cabinets, as Medicine won the challenge three times in a row from 2008 to 2010. Last year, the organising faculty, Law, used a nameless challenge shield.

Zi Yao is from the YLLSoM Class of 2015, and Elizabeth and Sean are from the YLLSoM Class of 2014.

