

MMA Tri-Event: ABC of Housemanship



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The Committee of SMMAMS following a discussion with Dato' Dr Azman Abu Bakar, Director, Medical Development Division of the Ministry of Health, Malaysia



Tan Li Yin (left) and Thum Chern Choong at the ABC of Housemanship seminar

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Housemanship is a daunting prospect, especially when you are a medical student looking at the gap which you have to make a huge leap over. Deemed stressful, tough, and depressive, many medical students experience difficulties when they make the transition into housemen. It was then a stroke of genius of the Malaysian Medical Association for they held the ABC of Housemanship seminar on 20 February 2016, to dispel myths and prepare medical students for the next stage of the journey: Housemanship. Being in the infancy of my medical career, it is a privileged opportunity for me to be able to listen to the opinions and perspectives of them who have been there and done that.

A word of congratulations has to be attributed to the Organisers for its impressive line-up of speakers, whose excellent deliveries enlightened the audience who were in the dark of what was in store in the future, and the topic selection itself, which was both relevant and essential not only to house officers, but also to the medical fraternity as a whole.

As healthcare professionals, it is imperative we utilise correct communication skills to deliver bad news clearly, honestly, and sensitively in order for patients to both understand and feel supported. One such framework deemed helpful in practise to deliver bad news is the SPIKES model. It would be interesting to know how many medical schools prepare their students to deliver bad news using the model, and how effective it translates into clinical practice when said students become housemen.

Specialists from various departments converged to speak about life in their respective fortes, and the qualities of housemen which they prize dearly. The theme was consistent across the board; they who are humble, hardworking, and respectful are sought after. In short: Attitude determines one's aptitude.

This seminar opened my eyes to opportunities and challenges before me. While it is a tough journey with a steep learning curve ahead, I shall not be afraid, for I will not walk alone; every member of the profession is here to assist me on this journey we all travel together.

Because, if you love your job, you do not have to work one more day of your life.

Let's Discuss Housemanship



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Greetings to all medical students.

As you all know, a Housemanship crisis issue has recently been sparked up and has become quite a significant topic of discussion among people in and out of the medical field. Being students of this field, I am sure this issue is at the back of our minds and thinking about the fact of whether or not we will all be offered jobs in the future can be quite worrying. I am in your shoes as well but now, the question is, why are we beating ourselves up about this matter? Are we going to quit our courses due to this crisis? Or are medical schools shutting down? Or is it that those who have aspired to become doctors are being forced to switch their courses out of the medical field? The answer is NO. Everything is going to remain just as it is now.

At the end of the day, what matters most is that we all stay focused on what we aim to do and together as Medicos, we will face all the humps and bumps that come along our journey. The fact is, we have no say in how the system works. The system will remain the same and all we can do is to adapt and make the best out of it.

But now, there is another question.

Why is there an overflow of housemen in the country in the first place? Is it because of the excessive medical graduates in Malaysia? Or is it due to the lack of training hospitals? Or is it due to the increasing extension rates of housemen that is taking up the placement of new medical graduates?

In a recent statement by Datuk Dr Noor Hisham, the Malaysian Director General of Health, he said that 30% of housemen undergo extension of housemanship due to various reasons resulting in the occupancy of placement of new house officers in the Government Hospitals. Hence, the waiting period for medical graduates is increasing as there are lack of placements in the training hospitals. He also mentioned that one of the reasons for the increasing extension rate is due to incompetency of the house officers.

Based on a survey which was conducted by SMMAMS, the statistics show that the average waiting period for medical graduates who graduated in the year 2015 is six to eight months. If this problem is not looked into and

solved soon, then the time of waiting for the upcoming batches of medical graduates might experience a steep increase. I hope the authorities from the Ministry of Health (MoH) will start investigating retrospectively on the core reason of the increase in extension rates among house officers.

Being a final year medical student myself, I am aware of the challenges we go through and I know that it is not easy to complete our medical degree and finally obtain our DR title. So when we are done, of course all of us would be more interested in serving the community rather than doing odd jobs for months. There are even instances where some lose interest in the medical field after working in other fields for such a long time. People say that no matter what, one should never forget the knowledge acquired. However in reality, waiting for months without medical exposure has the power to rust and wear off half of our existing knowledge. This can be a significant factor resulting in poor performances during the Housemanship course.

In our recent conversation with Dato' Dr Azman, the Director of the Medical Development Division in Ministry of Health; he told us that the Ministry is really looking into this matter right now as this issue is mushrooming and becoming chronic. It is honestly really good to hear such news. We hope for change for the betterment of future doctors.

Taking all these points into consideration, we, the members of SMMAMS will be meeting the authorities of MoH soon to discuss this ongoing issue on the status of Housemanship in Malaysia. We hope that MoH will take good measures to improve the existing situation.

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