

# And with the Promise of Spring: SMSUK in 2022



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Spring always seems to arrive in spurts and flutters here in the UK. Lilac blossoms emerge as early as January alongside the pleached hornbeams even as the oaks and beeches remain leafless far into April. Spring is marked by both change and continuity, of kaleidoscopic hues against the curious backdrop of bare trees, heralding a time of rejuvenation after the long, cold winter. For the Singapore Medical Society of the United Kingdom (SMSUK), spring likewise marks a time for renewal and transition, the 27th Executive Committee capping off the academic year with our two signature events before handing the reins over to the 28th Committee.

## Medical and dental school in a time of Corona: emerging from the long winter

The last two years have seen virtually all areas of life upended by the global COVID-19 pandemic, with sweeping

lockdowns and social restrictions implemented across the world. For international medical and dental students based in the UK, this has meant profound disruptions to medical education, living arrangements and the myriad challenges of each country's pandemic rules.

As an independent, cross-border organisation led by students for students, SMSUK has continued supporting our members and advocating their interests. Since 1994, the society has organised a variety of academic and social activities in collaboration with our alumni, education partners and sponsors, helping generations of Singaporeans navigate the vast transnational healthcare landscape. In response to COVID-19, we shifted most of our events online, allowing members to tune in from their places of lodgings or isolation, whether back home or in the UK.

SMSUK has also served as a key intermediary with the Singapore High Commission, Singapore Global Network and Singapore Medical Association, among others, ensuring our members received timely updates and support. Amid these unprecedented challenges, we have been grateful for the support offered by the Ministry of Health Holdings, SingHealth, National University Health System (NUHS) and National Healthcare Group – our longstanding partners back home – through virtual open houses and web-based teaching sessions.

Through the long, global winter of coronavirus, our community has remained united and tenacious, rallying to support each other while continuing to forge new memories and friendships. Though initially conceived as a stopgap measure, our new online activities inadvertently proved more convenient for many students. Therefore, we have chosen to keep some events online even as we began transitioning out of lockdowns and circuit breakers.

We expanded existing initiatives such as the Alumni Mentorship Programme, established a new partnership with NUHS and launched the Grassroots Events programme, empowering members to plan events of their own design. Meanwhile, the ever-popular Dinsical and Wider UK trip saw record numbers turning out in London and Glasgow for our first in-person gatherings in nearly two years. Finally, we capped off the academic year





with our signature Annual Dinner, a black-tie event held in London, and the Annual Conference, hosted online in collaboration with Malaysian Medics International (MMI). Indeed, this year's conference theme, "Uncharted: A Beacon in the Storm", has proven a fitting metaphor for the complex exigencies of our emerging post-pandemic world.

### Medicine and dentistry in a globalised world: looking to the year ahead

While COVID-19 has indeed produced unprecedented disruption, it has also accelerated long-standing trends towards globalisation. With the advent of remote-working technologies alongside a resurgence of international travel, the world is becoming smaller than ever before. This means that more people will come to identify with our community through shared experiences regardless of their cultures or countries of origin. SMSUK is committed to welcoming these unique individuals into an inclusive and close-knit community, supporting our members' welfare and career development through cogent, relevant and accessible initiatives. Therefore, to facilitate greater participation across different segments of our society, we have implemented robust feedback systems and restructured the committee to better represent dental and preclinical students.

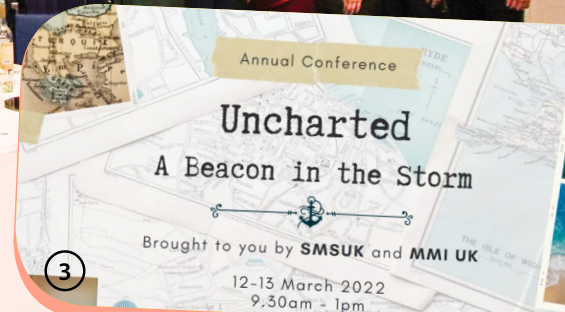
Spring augurs a time of renewal and opportunity; that is, as a forerunner of new undertakings still very much over the horizon. Amid these openings and challenges emerging from the pandemic, and building on the legacy of our predecessors, the 28th Executive Committee aspires to take the society to greater heights. With over 20 events in the pipeline, extensive transnational

partnerships and the exciting Grassroots Events programme, there truly is something for every member at SMSUK.

This year, we aim to forge stronger ties between students of all years and with our alumni wing, while increasing outreach to freshers coming from non-traditional routes of study in Singapore. We are particularly keen to introduce more specialist events catering to our dental student members who, though a minority, have increasingly proven an outsized presence and an integral part of our society. To support these initiatives, we will seek new partnerships with external sponsors and healthcare stakeholders. Finally, even as we seek to restore a sense of "normality", we remain deeply cognisant of those still affected by the manifold challenges of COVID-19 and will continue providing career and social support to them.

### And as the seasons pass

With the promise of spring, SMSUK looks forward to another fruitful year ahead with our members and partners. While the pandemic is not yet over, there is good cause for a tentative, watchful optimism even as we continue exercising caution, adaptability and empathy in these uncertain times. The Scottish have a useful saying, "n'er cast a clout till May is out"; that is, a prescient warning not to pack away the winter jackets till the ambling hawthorn trees have flowered in May. The life cycle of any organisation is marked by continuous evolution, attesting to the reiterative interplays of change and continuity. As the seasons continue passing us by, SMSUK will continue to anticipate and learn from unforeseen exigencies as we prepare for the upcoming slew of summer events. We hope to see you there! ♦



#### Legend

1. Lilac blooms lining the site of the ancient Aldgate (London, UK)
2. SMSUK's Annual Dinner 2022 (London, UK)
3. The SMSUK-MMI Annual Conference 2022 (online)

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