



WARP

and Weft

Text by Christic Moral

As the summer holidays draw to a close, we ready ourselves for the next school year refreshed, rejuvenated and inspired with fresh ideas. Having spent precious time with family and friends, many of us return to school feeling grounded, being reminded of our motivations and with a clearer perspective on our journeys. In August, the Singapore Medical Society of the United Kingdom (SMSUK) proudly welcomed our newest members through our orientation camp, where freshers connected with seniors to gain valuable insights about studying in the UK, as well as make new friends. In this issue, Alicia reflects on her journey of transitioning abroad and the lessons that guide her forward.

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Text by Alicia Chee

I still remember my 14-hour flight home from the UK early in June this year. Disconnected from the world where the lights of the aircraft have long dimmed, it was just me, a song by Eric Chou through my earpiece, and my inner thoughts flourishing. It felt like a breather after the endless studying for examinations – a moment of simplicity as if time stood still, a feeling I have seemingly long forgotten.

Learning to let go

On the train to London during the winter break, I read the book *You've Reached Sam* by Dustin Thao. Beyond the journey of grief, healing, saying goodbye and letting go, what struck a chord with me was the idea of not needing to have all the answers. The book's titular character, Sam, vaguely or never truly answered Julie's questions. At the end of the book, though still without clear answers, Sam knew they both needed to let go – to say goodbye and risk losing their connection forever in order to emerge stronger and to live in the present.

I saw a part of myself in these characters, learning to let go of the longing for home and embrace the new life ahead of me. The realisation that not all questions had to be answered, not all plans will turn out the way I had hoped, and not all in life can be predicted seemed simple – yet it earned a deeper meaning as I packed my bags and set off for Glasgow in September 2024, knowing it would be the longest I



Photo: SMSUK

would ever have been away from home. Though this was not how I envisioned my life unfolding, I would like to believe the path I am taking is and will be for the better. After all, it resonated with the quote on my lock screen from the Japanese medical drama *Code Blue*: "... there are also sights to behold by making detours you didn't mean to take".

Pursuing dreams

Reflecting on the past year, it has been an unimaginable journey. Sometimes unforgivable, sometimes rejuvenating, sometimes lonely, sometimes inspiring and sometimes, a mixture of all these emotions. The countless muscle names to review on my overdue Anki cards, the names of hypertensive medication like atenolol and amlodipine that, at that point in time, I just could not seem to remember, or the coursework reports I would stay up past midnight to complete just to submit into Turnitin – medical school just does not seem "medical school" enough without these. It felt like I was losing myself sometimes, a dream obscured by the task at hand – to get through my examinations. It was the darkest, albeit peaceful, nights that left me deep in thought or spiralling in loneliness, knowing that no one was awake and contactable on the "other side" of the world. When my mind wandered

off into a series of "why's" and "what if's", the simplest of moments would re-energise me and redefine my purpose.

When I volunteered at a paediatrics mock objective structured clinical examination for final-year students at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, I had to act as a patient and converse using a scripted list of answers as the final-year students practised. As I observed them, I saw the person I hope to become in four years' time: knowledgeable yet humble, nervous yet assuring, and a doctor that one could entrust their loved ones with.

On the flight back home, I watched the movie *The Greatest Showman*.

"Cause every night I lie in bed, the brightest colours fill my head

A million dreams are keeping me awake"

As the tune of "A Million Dreams" trailed off, it felt warm and rejuvenating, as if a fire in me reignited. I whipped out my phone and started typing in my notes the ideas for a committee I had in mind. Amid typing, what came with it was an odd yet much-needed enlightenment: the spark of a dream, wild enough, can light a path. This journey may be filled with challenges, sacrifices and may demand unimaginable resilience, but I still choose to believe in these dreams regardless. I guess it is the same for medicine; it may

just have started as a dream, but now we are all one step closer.

In this upcoming academic year, if there is one thing I could wish for, it is for everyone to never forget the glow in the eyes of our younger selves in pursuit of this dream no matter how it unfolds. We may struggle and feel lost at times, but I am certain that we will rekindle the strength to take flight again. I hope in a year, we will look back and realise how far we have all come on this journey of chasing our dreams, together. ♦

Legend

1. SMSUK's annual orientation camp
2. The view of University of Glasgow on an evening run
3. Alicia at an SMSUK Scotland and Northern Ireland regional social event

Alicia is a Year 2 medical student at University of Glasgow.



Photo: Alicia Chee



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