



# MEDSOC

REPORT

BY PHILIPPA SANDERS (15-20)

Created in the autumn of 1999 by **Alex Self** (93-00), **Manu Rangar** (95-00) and **Sean Sarma** (90-00), MedSoc initially only included members of the Upper Sixth and was a relatively small group of 10 to 15 students. Like the MedSoc of 2020, the society invited doctors to talk to students about what to expect from medical school and beyond.

**H**owever, the similarities end there: today, MedSoc welcomes students from Year 10 to 13 and is comprised of approximately 30 regular members. Dr Self, now Head of the Radiology Department at the RVI, remarked that 'It was a real pleasure to come back almost exactly 20 years later to see how well the society has flourished over the years'.

Every Thursday for three years I have scurried to Dr Barker's classroom to learn about the medical profession at MedSoc. Every week, topics ranging from oncology to obstetrics would be advertised on MedSoc posters scattered around school, and I would find myself reeled in yet again to listen to medical professionals talk passionately about their speciality. Not only did MedSoc entice me back week after week with the promise of inspiration for my future career, but it also welcomed me with the promise of real community spirit.

Last year, I applied to become a part of the MedSoc Committee. I remain thankful that I was selected for my preferred position as newsletter writer, because it has enabled me to learn more about the complete gamut of medical specialities. The talks offered were, however, much more valuable than my research. Being told what a doctor's favourite part of their job is and how they deal with the challenges their vocation presents is indispensable—not only did it help my fellow medics and me at medical interviews, but it also affirmed my choice to pursue medicine. Having initially been drawn to medicine by an interest in

psychiatry, talks by professionals at MedSoc have encouraged me to broaden my medical horizons.

This year, two talks in particular have galvanised me into exploring my options further. The first was by Fiona Holdsworth, an oncology nurse advance practitioner and postgraduate lecturer in oncology and palliative care. Mrs Holdsworth not only explained how various cancer treatments work, but she also expressed the importance of empathy and mental fortitude to a medical career; her advice will persist with me throughout my medical journey. The second talk was by Dr Arul Immanuel, a consultant upper GI and laparoscopic surgeon at the RVI. Dr Immanuel's videos of laparoscopic surgery taking place, including videos of the state-of-the-art DaVinci surgical robot at work, opened my eyes to surgery for the first time; I am now excited to explore the possibilities of

I enjoyed organising the talks, working with a fabulous team and building relationships with the younger years'. As Unna mentions, MedSoc teaches invaluable lessons about how best to lead others and about how to work effectively as a team.

The last task of the 2019-20 MedSoc Committee was to conduct interviews and select the members of the 2020-21 Committee. The novel ideas introduced by our successors leave me eager to return to MedSoc in the future. Some of the most exciting changes proposed include the creation of a MedSoc website and Instagram page to expand MedSoc's accessibility; the prospect of ethical debates; more student-led presentations to encourage members to engage in their own medical research and increased interactivity at MedSoc meetings.

Content that MedSoc is being left in safe hands, therefore, I can only hope that



**MedSoc Committee 2019-2020 (L-R): Keshav Krishnan, Kraig Coutinho, Adelynn Immanuel, Philippa Sanders, Finn Gavin, Unna Palaniappan. [Not present: Katharine Loughney.]**

a surgical career during my studies at Newcastle University.

MedSoc is not only important due to the insight it provides into medicine. The experience in teamwork it lends to its Committee members is unparalleled. One of our two Chairpersons, Unna Palaniappan, remarks that 'I first joined MedSoc in Year 10, like most of our members, when I started to think about what I wanted to do in the future. It was something I looked forward to every Thursday and it taught me a lot, so being Chairwoman this year was very rewarding.

I am invited back to the Society not as a member of the Committee, but as a medical student, foundation doctor or even a consultant. I have no doubt that MedSoc will progress and grow into an even more formidable force at the RGS in the years to come, and I look forward to returning to RGS to share any experience I may have gained during my own medical journey.

**Philippa Sanders is an offer holder for Medicine at Newcastle University from October 2020.**