

**HOW TO:**

# **SIGN UP FOR 11 YEARS OF POVERTY**

**A Blind Mice Guide to Medical School Application**

**BY**



*For all the oxen who carried this mouse*

**Disclaimer:**

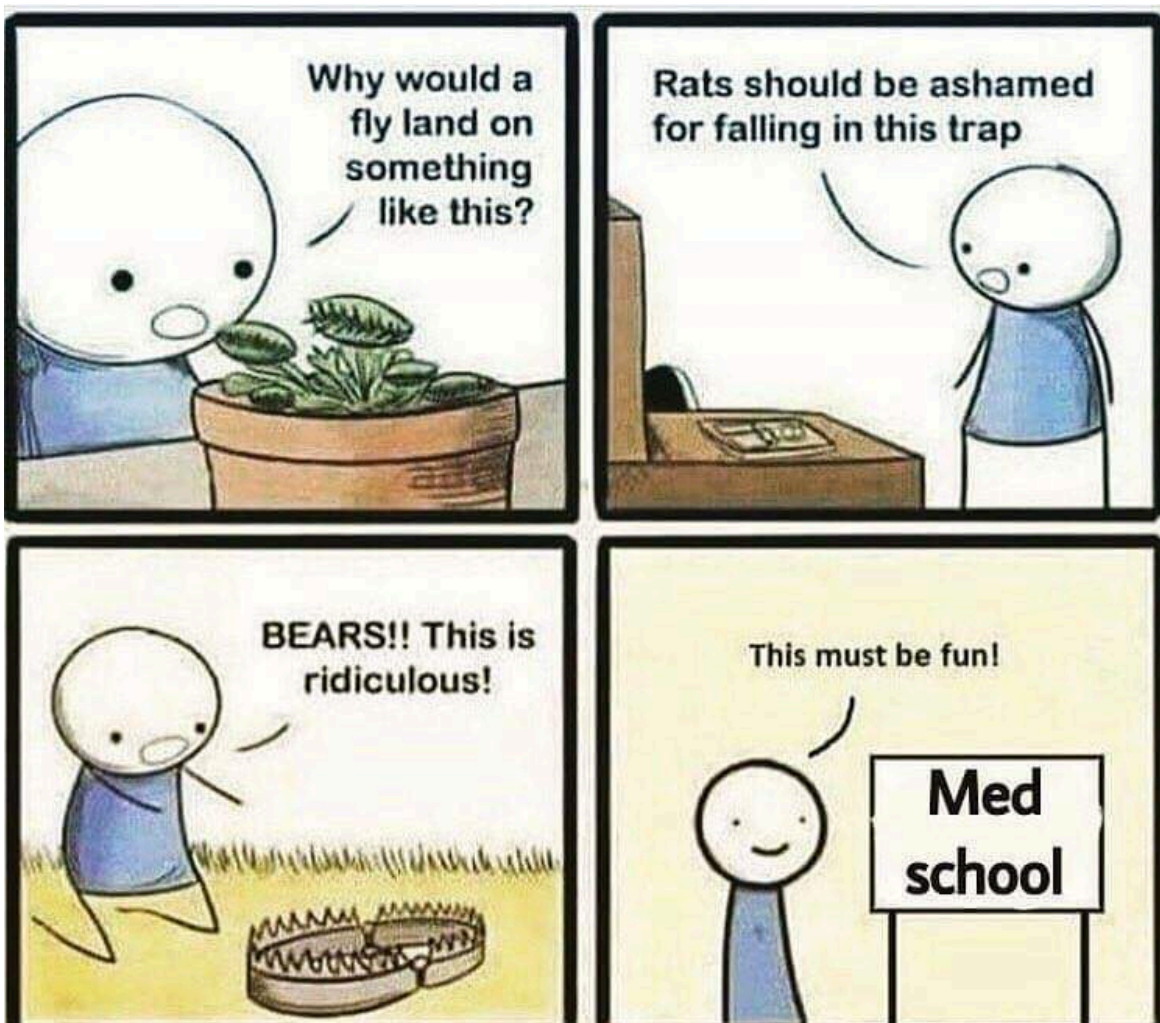
J is a polytechnic graduate who was offered admissions to **NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine** and the **Yale-NUS & Duke-NUS Liberal Arts and Medicine Pathway** in 201X.

Due to his mediocrity, he was rejected by NTU Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

This lowly medical student would like to add that the guide was based on his personal pre-COVID experience and public domain information.

While there may be some changes to the selection process post-COVID, the attributes that the medical schools are looking for will probably remain the same (assuming that finding the cure for COVID is not the new minimum criteria).

All advice given is in no way representative of the views of any institutions (duh).



[Source](#)

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# INTRODUCTION

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**Power, Prestige and Pay.** These are the 3Ps associated with becoming a doctor that we probably grew up hearing.

Before going any further, it is crucial to understand what you are getting yourself into if you are to study medicine.

Your career as a doctor starts the moment you enter medical school. It involves:

## **5 years of studying...**

a ~\$150,000<sup>1</sup> degree that comes with periodic/self-inflicted high stress and low study-life balance

## **1 year as a House Officer...**

slogging away 90 hours a week for a ~\$3.5K salary and a title of 'Dr' which is only provisional

## **5 years of bond...**

working in a government healthcare institution with a high chance of pay stagnation (~\$4-5K if you cannot specialise) or minimal pay increment (if you are training to specialise)

**Total Years: The titular 11 Years of Poverty**<sup>2</sup> (Especially after comparing yourself with peers who studied waayyyyy cheaper 4-year degrees and are already peaking in their careers)

In the unlikely event<sup>3</sup> that you survived and are lucky<sup>4</sup> good enough to specialise by the end of 11 years<sup>5</sup>, you will be a Resident. And hopefully, within a few more years, you will become a Consultant with the coveted \$10K monthly salary that your parents were always talking about<sup>6</sup>.

In summary, let us review the 3Ps<sup>7</sup> of becoming a doctor. Are they really worth all that trouble?

### **Power:**

I guess that depends on how you define power. Having to decide whether a patient should have a catheter stuck into his penis does seem pretty cool.

### **Prestige:**

Sure, only if you have no other way of getting validation<sup>8</sup> and being called a doctor gives you a raging hard-on.

### **Pay:**

What pay?

With all that being said, if you still find yourself considering about studying medicine right now...

Then congrats! It means you possess the sole politically correct reason for pursuing a career in medicine, the 4th 'P' — **Passion.**

*You are probably thinking: Yes, I want to serve the community by healing people and making their lives better. I want to help people!*

But why medicine?

Is that the only career capable of helping others? Every job is capable of contributing to the community in their own ways, even [accountants](#). And why not just help by volunteering?

*You may then say: Yeah, but I am more interested in helping others through the healthcare aspect.*

Then how about being a nurse or any other allied healthcare professional? From physiotherapists to medical technologists and diagnostic radiographers, all of them are involved in healing the sick.

### **So the question still stands — Why medicine<sup>9</sup>?**

<sup>1</sup> If you are considering a scholarship for medical school, I think you will probably find them very limited. Getting into medical school is already hard enough, and now you have to compete with those who got in too? Unless you are a god (in which case you probably wouldn't even need this guide), the chances of getting it are quite slim. So its best to have a contingency plan for your finances (**there are always bursaries and financial aid**).

<sup>2</sup> Unless your parents are loaded and are willing to pay \$600k to break the bond, there are really not many other ways you can escape before the 11 years are up. Go figure.

<sup>3</sup> This is not accounting for the possibility of flunking a year in medical school, having to apply for residency multiple times, not being able to specialise, being undecided about your speciality or doing a speciality and then changing your mind halfway. All of which can set you back a few more years.

<sup>4</sup> The difficulty of becoming a specialist is not exaggerated. There is now a higher demand for 'generalist' doctors as compared to niche specialists such as neurosurgeons or endocrinologist according to MOH. Please read this [article](#),

<sup>5</sup> Read [this](#) to understand more about the Medical Service Career Path

<sup>6</sup> An amusing example of survivorship bias and over-generalisation. It seems that the only doctors that exist in the minds of most non-medical people are the consultants earning \$10K a month, who are actually a minority.

<sup>7</sup> There is actually another 'P' for becoming a doctor: Parents. If this is the reason you have for studying medicine, please have a good talk with your parents about your actual goals rather than waste time and effort on a half-hearted medical school application.

<sup>8</sup> If this resonated with you, I bet that you are one of those pricks who have/will have medicine, law and dentistry as the top three choices In their university application.

<sup>9</sup> My own reason for studying medicine wasn't all that noble or better either. Unlike other applicants whose 'passion' stemmed from seeing their grandparents die of cancer or some other debilitating health conditions (mine only did after I got in), mine was to study the human body. A stupid reason on hindsight. I sincerely hope that with what I have shared, your reason will be better.

During my interview, I acknowledged that other careers could also help people and that I wanted to study medicine for the content. ~~I was probably only accepted because they needed to fill the quota for polytechnic students.~~

# APPLYING TO YLLSOM & LKCSOM

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**TLDR:** Just read [this](#) for advice from an actual doctor

Based on the new admission system, grades will be used to shortlist candidates for the interview. Hence, your portfolio will only be used for consideration after you have been shortlisted. To have a good gauge of your chances, please take a look at the [NUS IGP](#) and [NTU IGP](#).

For polytechnic students, you also need to check if you have the Subject Pre-Requisites to pursue medicine ([NUS](#), [NTU](#)).

If you have an exceptional portfolio (national athlete, international math/science olympiad champion etc) but feel that your grades can't make it, you can consider applying via the Aptitude-Based Admissions Scheme ([ABAS](#)).

	Applicants	Interviewed	Places
YLL	~3000	~900	300
LKC	~900	~450	180

## Documents Preparation

As part of your application, these are the documents that you will have to prepare as well.

	YLL	LKC
1	500 words personal statement	300 words personal statement
2	2 referee reports	2 referee reports
3	CCA List	-
4	Official Testimonial	-
5	-	BMAT

### 1) Personal Statement

If you are seriously considering medicine, you should probably work on this as early as possible. Writing a 'sincere' personal statement takes time, and it requires a lot of reflection. Hopefully, the [introduction](#) was able to guide your thought process a little.

To help you prepare before the application window opens, the following are the prompts from YLL and LKC.

**YLL (500 words):** Write about experiences that have shaped your desire to study medicine

**LKC (300 words):** In not more than 300 words, introduce yourself including, but not limited to, the reasons for wishing to study medicine and of any experience that may have driven the desire to become a doctor. Leadership experience and teamwork ability should be highlighted.

Regardless of how it is asked, your personal statement is ultimately a narrative of how you have developed yourself in pursuit of becoming a medical student/doctor.

As you are writing about your experiences, try to weave in lessons/realisations/skills that you have picked up. As much as it is about your passion (don't forget that everyone applying is supposed to have that), your personal statement is also about why you deserve a spot. Use the opportunity to display qualities which you think will make you a 'good' medical student/doctor.

Consider these two generic examples:

My grandmother died of cancer → I don't want anyone else to suffer like her → I want to help others like her → Hence, I want to study medicine

*This explains why you want to study medicine, but it does not give the school any reason to choose you. Being a doctor is more than just having the heart to serve (every decent person has that too).*

My grandmother died of cancer → I don't want anyone else to suffer like her → went to volunteer in hospice / do scientific research → picked up new skills / got more interested in medicine → Hence, I want to study medicine

*Sharing about what you have done because of your passion helps to emphasise your commitment and dedication to it. Furthermore, these experiences can also illustrate how you have developed certain qualities or understanding that are relevant to being a doctor.*



med\_school\_memes\_



## Med school Personal statement Bingo!

New Scientist	Bronze DofE taught me leadership, teamwork, empathy and communication skills necessary for a career in medicine	Playing the violin taught me communication skills	This inspired me to choose Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Physics at A-level
Rewarding	[description of doctor talking to patient like a decent human being]	Dynamic fast-changing field	Intellectual challenge
Ever since I can remember	I saw that the needs of patients differ greatly but are also similar	Weird synonyms for disease e.g. ailment, malady	My volunteering taught me empathy, compassion and self-sacrifice
I want lifelong learning all the time	To relax, I like swimming – which also taught me leadership	Oliver Sacks	I learnt time-management somehow

It is ok if you do not have any experiences directly related to healthcare. As you can see from the Bingo above, you can develop qualities of a medical student/doctor with non-healthcare activities too. **What matters most is how you draw lessons from your experiences (whatever that may be) and relate it to being a medical student/doctor.**

Don't worry if your personal statement sounds cliché. There are only *that* many reasons and qualities that you can have to study medicine. The Bingo covered almost all of them.

**To set yourself apart, I feel that it is about how you acknowledge the limitations of medicine in your personal statement. By doing so, you are proving that you are a mature candidate who understand what it truly means to be a doctor and one who can balance idealistic passion with reality.**



Read [this](#) if you need an elaboration of what I was trying to say above. You should also check out the [Reading List](#) chapter of this guide to find out more on what it means to be a doctor.

P.S: Be prepared to be asked questions from your own personal statement. Make sure you can elaborate and **defend** everything you write in there.

Posted by u/Oncovirus 9 months ago 🗨️ 👍 🤔

[shitpost] Next year's batch of med school personal statements

Shitpost



🗨️ 142 Comments 🎁 Give Award ➡ Share 📌 Save 🚫 Hide 🗨️ Report

98% Upvoted

## 2) Referee Reports

This is the reason why you should ~~suck up~~ maintain good relationships with some of your lecturers while you are in school. Having a lecturer who knows you personally can help make your recommendation more sincere and substantiated. It is also advisable to get a lecturer who you have worked with before as they will be able to provide insights to your character and elaborate on activities/achievements you accomplished in school.

If you aren't close to any lecturers and are like everyone else who will be scrambling to get recommendation letters during the university application period, here is what you should do:

- Prepare a copy of your CV for your lecturer so that they can list some of your achievements and qualities in their recommendation letter
- Write an explanatory email to them about your application and what you need from them
- Make sure you include every detail that you want to have in your recommendation
- Keep track of the submission deadlines and gently chase when it is approaching (or else you are screwed)

### 3) CCA List (For YLL)

The website states that you have to include your top 10 most recent activities/achievements, from secondary school and above. As mentioned in the Personal Statement section above, you should list activities/achievements that display qualities and experiences relevant to being a medical student/doctor.

If you find yourself having to include multiple one-day volunteering events and being GM/GL of some camp (or anything along those lines)... I can only say good luck. Unless you have some other very very very exceptional achievements to make up for these trash (no offence) activities, you should probably have worked more on your portfolio.

Please consider subscribing to our [Four Blind Mice Portfolio Building Series](#) if you are not applying any time soon and want to salvage/improve your portfolio!

### 4) Official Testimonial (For YLL)

For JC students, this will be the official document given to you by your school.

For Polytechnic students, this can be a referee letter with your school letterhead.

### 5) BMAT (For LKC)

This is a pre-requisite if you are applying to LKCSOM. The general timeline of BMAT is as follows:

Early September to Early October - Registration for BMAT opens

Late October/Early November - BMAT Test day

Mid-November/Late November - BMAT Results

This means that if you are considering to apply to LKCSOM, you have to begin preparing the year before.

An excellent study material that I recommend is [BMAT Ninja](#). It is a comprehensive resource that includes study tips, question banks and past year exam papers with answers. It costs 150 SGD. If you are unable to afford a personal account, you may want to consider getting it on Carousell. Check out this [seller](#) who is currently selling it at 10 SGD.

If you are willing to spend more, you can consider getting the [6med BMAT Bundle](#). It is from the same creators as BMAT Ninja.

## After Being Shortlisted

Assuming that you have been shortlisted, you will be invited for interview with the respective schools.

	YLL	LKC
1	Situational Judgement Test	-
2	Focused Skills Assessment	Multiple Mini Interview

**Important Note:** If you are rejected after sitting for the interview, you can only apply again the following year through ABAS (this applies for both schools).

### 1) Situational Judgement Test (For YLL)

SJT is a pencil and paper MCQ test that you will have to turn up for. It is usually on a different date as FSA.

This is more of a test to see if you are a decent human being, so there is nothing for you to study. There are no right or wrong answers either.

The questions are mostly case studies and scenarios where you either have to choose the appropriate course of action or judge the appropriateness of the action.

If you really want to prepare, you can get a rough idea of the questions from this [UKCAT SJT question bank](#). They are quite similar.

The bottom line: Be yourself and answer according to your morals and gut feeling. After all, the answers you give are supposed to reflect your decisions in real life. If the question is healthcare related, **ALWAYS REMEMBER PATIENT FIRST**.

### 2) Focused Skills Assessment (For YLL)

The Focused Skills Assessment is a series of interview station that aims to identify **qualities that medical students** should have in a friendly/low-stress setting. It comprises of:

- **2 Role Play Stations**

You will be given 1 minute to read the task outside and 5 minutes to prepare. Similar to an oral examination, plan your responses and pre-empt some possible obstacles.

You will be asked to interact with an actor in a given scenario. The scenarios are non-medical related and often relatable to your student life.

There will be an assessor observing who may ask a few questions about your experience at the end of the scenario.

Be a **good listener** and act how you normally would.

- **1 Group Station**

You will be grouped with 5-6 other candidates and be given 1 or 2 minutes to read a task. There will also be a time limit to discuss and plan within the group.

Instead of competing to answer or lead the discussion, try to complement your teammates in areas that they may be lacking.

Don't talk just for the sake of talking. Think carefully about what you are going to say and make sure to back it up with reason. Don't be afraid to disagree either, but make sure you can justify your stand.

- **1 Task Station**

You will be given multiple manual tasks to complete within a limited time.

No medical knowledge or technical skills is required. It is more of an assessment to see how well you cope under pressure. As a close acquaintance once said, **“Acting calm and composed is the privilege of the mighty.”**

Since there are multiple tasks involved, assess and plan your course of action. Try to start by tackling those in which you are most confident in completing first.

At the end of the station, the assessor may ask some questions about your rationales and feelings.

- **1 Personal Statement Station**

A 15 minute station where you have to ~~kneel, beg and sell your soul~~ defend your motivations for studying medicine. Show that you have considered the reality and alternatives of being a doctor (and why you are still only settling for medicine). Refer to the [introduction](#).

The assessor will be asking questions based on your personal statement, so be sure to be able elaborate, substantiate and/or bring up more examples outside of your PS to back your claims.

You can prepare by thinking of possible questions and answers (just search online).

Familiarise yourself with local healthcare affairs and the basic principles of medical ethics.

### 3) Multiple Mini Interviews (LKC)

The MMI (multiple mini interviews) is similar to the FSA, but with 8 stations (each 5 minutes long). Watch this [video](#) to understand how it works.

As the LKCSOM MMI is adapted from the UK medical school admission process, you can find a lot of resources online to help with your preparation. [6med](#) is once again a really good resource for you to start with. You can also consider buying their crash course materials.

In general, the 8 stations can be classified into these categories:

- **Personal Statement**

Similar to the one found in FSA, but only 5 minutes long. So be sure to make your answers sweet and concise.

- **Role Play**

Similar to the one found in FSA.

- **Picture Stimulus**

You will be given a picture to look at and an interviewer will ask your thoughts about it (similar to an oral examination).

Try to relate it to healthcare and share your thoughts beyond the picture (the picture should just be the springboard for your discussion).

- **Public Issues**

You will be asked to discuss a broad question relating to a public issue in Singapore, which may or may not be related to healthcare.

Prepare by getting up to date with current affairs and forming some opinions about it.

- **Hypothetical Scenarios**

Similar to the role play stations, but instead of acting it out, you will be responding verbally about your actions and decisions regarding the scenarios or task

As the response will be verbal, make sure that your thought process is clear and logical.

Visit the 6med link I shared above to find out more.

## General Tips for the Interview

- **Reflect**

Know your personal statement and portfolio really well. Ask yourself “why medicine” and follow up with each successive answer with more ‘whys’ until you hit bedrock in your reasoning. Even though this question may not come up in your interview, this practice will help to solidify your thought process and motivations.

Be certain of your personal values and convictions.

- **Read**

Look through ‘common’ medical school interview questions to strengthen your thought process. You can have mock interview sessions with your peers or lecturers to get some feedback. Not only read up on current affairs related to healthcare and the general wellbeing of the population, but also form your own opinions about them (this is what makes you unique)

Refer to the [Reading List](#) chapter to gain more insights into medicine and life as a doctor. These books and articles may offer new perspectives that you can weave into your own answers during the interview.

- **Be Yourself**

AKA a decent human being with some empathy and sincerity. If you are a natural snake and asshole, there is no point acting otherwise. Even if you do manage to act your way into medical school, do you really want to maintain that facade for the next 11 years? ~~Maybe you should consider applying to Business School.~~

## Personal Thoughts

You can try hard, but don't be a tryhard.

YLLSOM was never my first choice when I was applying to medical school. I did not even consider applying to YLLSOM until I received mediocre BMAT results. I went for the FSA with little pressure and no stakes (since I didn't want it anyway). Due to this mindset, I was really comfortable being myself throughout the entire session and left without any regrets. I told myself that if I still could not get into medical school with my real personality, it just meant that I was not suitable for it.

On the flip side, I ended up being really awkward and canned during my MMI as I was over conscious of my every word and action. The 5 minutes given never seemed right for me as I kept having either too little or too much content to cover. After being rejected, I emailed NTU to get some feedback on my MMI performance. It turned out that I was in the 25th percentile.

Sometimes chasing a girl too hard turns her off even more. Especially when you are already an ugly bastard.

# APPLYING TO DUKE-NUS

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Duke-NUS is a postgraduate medical school modelled after the US medical school system. You can only apply to the school after you have obtained your first degree.

Instead of a 5-year MBBS course, you will be studying a 4-year MD (Doctor in Medicine) course to become a doctor. The school fees are around \$50,000 a year, and you will have a 4 years bond upon completion of housemanship.

There are various Pre-MD pathways which you can apply for after your tertiary education. You can check them out [here](#).

Note that the Pre-MD pathway only offers you a **conditional admission** to Duke-NUS. You are still expected to maintain a stipulated academic performance (Uni GPA and MCAT/GAMSAT score) for successful admission to the MD programme upon your graduation. However, Duke-NUS will be providing you with additional resources and guidance throughout your undergraduate years in preparation of your admission.

In essence, you will have a higher chance of getting into Duke-NUS through the Pre-MD pathway as compared to applying for it after your first degree. Duke-NUS only took in 81 students in 2019, with a sizeable portion already coming from the Pre-MD pathways.

The Pre-MD pathway is ultimately a long and costlier way of becoming a doctor. But if you are dead set on pursuing medicine and cannot do so via the more conventional pathways (YLLSOM or LKCSOM), perhaps this is something you should consider.

## Application Process

You will only have to indicate your interest in the Pre-MD pathway on the online undergraduate application form of whichever university you are applying to.

A complete application will consist of information from your university application, including letters of recommendation, and a personal statement on your interest and motivation in applying for this pathway.

There will be two rounds of interview conducted by two separate professors on the same day if you are shortlisted. The interviews are similar to the Personal Statement stations found in the FSA and MMI. Just be sure to know your motivations well.

My personal experience of the interview was quite chill. It was more of a conversation with the professors about what I wanted to do if I was accepted. We also discussed some healthcare issues happening in Singapore and the region.

# READING LIST

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If you are unsure about pursuing medicine or wish to find out more about what being a doctor truly entails, I have compiled a few reading materials that can hopefully be of help to you.

These are the same books and articles that guided me in my reflections before and after getting into medical school.

## Fiction

- 1) **The House of God (Samuel Shem)**. *A classic satirical novel about residency training in a US hospital.*
- 2) **Man's 4th Best Hospital (Samuel Shem)**. *A sequel to The House of God that provides an updated perspective about healthcare and working in a hospital*
- 3) **The Postmortal (Drew Magary)**. *A really fun and thought-provoking novel about the implications of living in a world where the cure for ageing has been found*
- 4) **The People in the Trees (Hanya Yanagihara)**. *This fictional memoir of a researcher sheds light on the ethical issues and potential exploitation associated with scientific advancement*

## Non-Fiction

- 1) **Being Mortal (Atul Gawande)**. *Self-explanatory book that I really recommend reading*
- 2) **Complications (Atul Gawande)**. *One of my all-time favourite book that explores the limitations and fallibilities of medicine and being a doctor*
- 3) **Better (Atul Gawande)**. *Everything by this guy is simply gold*
- 4) **This is Going To Hurt (Adam Kay)**. *Funny book about life as a doctor in UK*
- 5) **A Young Doctor's Notebook (Mikhail Bulgakov)**
- 6) **When Breath Becomes Air (Paul Kalanithi)**

## Other Reading Materials

[Hobbit SMA blog](#). Written by the same doctor whose advice on medical school application I shared earlier. She provides a lot of insightful yet satirical take on local healthcare issues and life as a doctor.

[Doctors Tell All—and It's Bad](#). This article examines the corrosive doctor-patient relationship at the heart of the US health-care crisis. Make sure to take note of all the books mentioned in it as they are really interesting reads too.

## Films

**The Death of Mr Lazarescu (2005)**. *I am just gonna say that it is really worth the watch*



# REFERENCES

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## General

<https://www.doctorxdentist.com/complete-guide-to-nus-medicine-application>

<https://nushsmmed.wordpress.com/medical-schools/>

<https://chasingfaithandlove.wordpress.com/2017/02/24/applying-for-medschool/>

[https://www.reddit.com/r/SGExams/comments/cdeb29/uni\\_so\\_you\\_want\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_doctor\\_all\\_you\\_need\\_to/](https://www.reddit.com/r/SGExams/comments/cdeb29/uni_so_you_want_to_be_a_doctor_all_you_need_to/)

## NUS

<https://nusmedicine.nus.edu.sg/admissions/medicine/undergraduate#faq>

## LKC MMI

<http://www.lkcmedicine.ntu.edu.sg/aboutus/Pages/FAQs.aspx>

<https://www.blackstonetutors.co.uk/lee-kong-chian-school-of-medicine-ntu-interview-questions.html>

<http://enewsletter.ntu.edu.sg/thelkcmedicine/Issue%2010/Pages/articleinfofocus2.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

## Duke-NUS

<https://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/admissions-blog/admissions-blog/2019/02/23/tips-how-to-prepare-for-applicant-day>