

# HUMANITIES

## The Dalhousie Medical Students' Society

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2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Dalhousie Medical Students' Society (DMSS). Dalhousie Medical School was founded in 1868, but it wasn't until two years later in 1870 that the DMSS was formed. It was established to officially represent medical students at Dalhousie with the objective of "mutual improvement of its members in the Medical Sciences<sup>1</sup>." Its principal role was to organize weekly seminars called "Quizzing Class" to discuss assigned subjects presented in regular lectures. Over time, the Society expanded to better represent values and interests of the Dalhousie medical students through academic, professional, and social student activities.

Currently, the DMSS Executive and Council members are elected or appointed to represent medical students to the Faculty of Medicine, Alumni, the medical profession, and our local and global community. The Society also tries to make medical school life a bit more interesting; it helps build a sense of camaraderie and broaden horizons so that we can become not only insightful physicians, but also more engaged community members.

Community engagement is closely tied to culturally inclusive education and student diversity, important aspects of the DMSS in the past decade. Collaborating with the Global Health Office, various student groups have taken initiative to provide supplementary workshops and events on topics such as transgender health, Islamic cultural sensitivity, and newcomer health, featuring perspectives of both patients and physicians. This year, the DMSS partnered with NS College of Family Physicians and Doctors Nova Scotia to represent the medical community at all levels of training for the first time at the PRIDE Parade.

Student wellness is also a priority for the DMSS. Supported by the generous donations from the class of 1983, the DMSS has continued to center initiatives around wellness to ensure that students are supported through the challenges of medical school. During Wellness Week—held in March each year—the DMSS hosts a week of events aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles such as mindfulness workshops, cooking challenges, and financial wellness lectures. Our DMSS Sports and Wellness Rep and Student Affairs Wellness Liaisons (SAWLs) are students dedicated to organizing wellness initiatives and providing peer support.

The DMSS has been an integral part of student life, and in addition to its focus on student inclusion and wellbeing, has had numerous noteworthy milestones. Many of these remain of significant value to students and are detailed below:

- In 1907, DMSS kicked off the first Medical Ball with 400 guests attending. Since this time, this annual function has been one of the most exciting and successful events of the year. In any given decade, medical students rarely give up the opportunity to get together with peers and celebrate well into the night. At the annual gala, student-nominated awards are presented to recognize outstanding students who contribute to student life and community, demonstrate leadership among peers, and further humanities in medicine<sup>2</sup>.
- Our next milestone was the founding of the Dalhousie Medical Journal (DMJ) in 1936, with I. Roy Gold as the first editor-in-chief. With the dawn of World War II, student activities were put on hold, and it was not until 1954 that the DMJ returned from its hiatus. The aims of the Journal are to highlight student research and writing while producing engaging content for its readers in the medical community. Although its content has been entirely student-generated in the past, DMJ currently accepts submissions from all members of allied healthcare, featuring both science and humanities<sup>3</sup>. The DMJ has garnered credibility and respect among the student body over the years, and we would like to congratulate the editorial board on 46 impressive volumes thus far.
- Starting in 1969, Dalhousie Medical Students have put on an annual variety show for sold-out crowds as a fundraiser for local Maritime charities. In February 2019, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of EUPHORIA!—one of the longest-running annual projects of any medical school in Canada, as well as the largest contributor for local community projects from the DMSS. What started as a simple (but ambitious) idea to collect money to support community work, the amount raised by the performances and donated to charities over the years is estimated to be about \$800,000. EUPHORIA! has become a great part of our student life and traditions, and we wish its success to continue for many years to come.
- Since 1977, a critical role of the DMSS has been providing national representation for Dalhousie medical students in the Canadian Federation of Medical Students. This national organization of medical students provides large-scale advocacy on medical education, government affairs, student wellness, and global health. The DMSS represents the interests of our students as well as of the Atlantic region, coordinating with neighbouring

medical schools with similar demographics and concerns.

With the inauguration of the New Brunswick teaching campus in 2010, the DMSS expanded to include medical students in Saint John. During this transition, the DMSS had a strong commitment with the Associate Deans to ensure that the students in New Brunswick campus were well integrated into the community of Dalhousie Medicine. The Society's leadership deliberately grew to address the needs of students in Saint John, with strong and proportionate representation across the campuses. The DMSS hosts events in both provinces, and all students are invited to DMSS-wide social events, such as Euphoria and Med Ball in Halifax and the Charity Golf Classic in St. John. Although we are geographically separated, we aim to ensure that all students feel a sense of belonging within the DMSS.

The DMSS organizes and supports many activities and exciting initiatives, but only through the efforts of passionate students who envision making the medical school experience more meaningful and enjoyable. There are ample opportunities for students to get involved, and student participation in any of our activities is warmly welcomed and celebrated. It is well

documented that long after the steps of the coagulation cascade are forgotten, students fondly remember the fun and impact of their extracurricular endeavors.

In 1870, the Dalhousie College Gazette welcomed the inception of the DMSS and suggested the inclusion of "other features which tho' not more important, will have a more general interest<sup>4</sup>." And indeed, a century and a half later, the Quizzing Classes gave way to a variety of aspects which are more engaging and represent various aspects of medical school life. This creates an environment where students can explore and share their own interests within medicine. The DMSS has been home to many great physicians, and it is our mission to support medical students blossom into compassionate, well-rounded doctors who will look back on their years in medical school with a sense of community and satisfaction.

### References

1. Mort Rucker. DMSS 100th Anniversary.pdf. Dalhousie Medical Journal. 1962;15(2).
2. Dalhousie Medical Students' Society. Dalhousie Medical Students' Society. <https://www.dmss.ca/>. Accessed October 17, 2019.
3. DALHOUSIE MEDICAL JOURNAL. <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/DMJ>. Accessed October 17, 2019.
4. Medical Students' Society. Dalhousie College Gazette. 1870;3(2).

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