

11th MyPSA National Pharmacy Quiz and 5th Piala Aishah 2019

An Unexpected Win

By: Tan Oi Jin, Monash Pharmacy Year 3

To define my experience that weekend with one word, it would be “life-changing”. As exaggerated as it may sound, it was definitely the case for me, being the only Year 3 student to represent Monash University in the prestigious National Pharmacy Quiz. This was my first time, and we were up against 18 teams from different pharmacy schools nationwide. Naturally, I was terrified. The quiz encompassed a wide scope of topics; some familiar, many others foreign. I was not as prepared as I had hope to be to.

We trained briefly with our lecturers, obviously experts in their respective fields. I felt relieved and happy to have received plenty of moral support and other assistance from the school instead of constant pressure to win, which is common in such competitions. Due to the scarcity of time, and despite our lecturers’ best efforts, relying on these training sessions alone is insufficient to fully equip ourselves for the quiz. There was a lot of additional revision to be done to adequately prepare ourselves.

Meeting new acquaintances was definitely the highlight of my experience as I rarely had opportunities to interact with my seniors. They were the ones who made this nerve-racking experience enjoyable. My team, Monash A was led by the altruistic Fabian Moh. Along with the intelligent Loy Yee Toeng and the quick-witted Chai Chang Jian, all three played a vital role in our victory. For the first part of the competition which consisted of two preliminary rounds, we were tested via written and oral multiple-choice questions. Ho Pei Qi and Sally Ng, who represented Monash University in Piala Aishah, the compounding segment of the competition, performed outstandingly. With the contribution of their scores and ours in the preliminary rounds, we were shortlisted into the top 8. We made it to the semi-finals!



Deep in thought: Tan Oi Jin (left) and Loy Yee Toeng (right) in discussion during the semi-finals.

The next day, our sleep-deprived team competed in a written multiple-choice and short-answer questions challenge within 50 minutes. It was a race against time, but, astonishingly, I found the short-answer questions familiar and thus I was able to answer them. After the semi-finals, we waited eagerly for the results to be announced. Only four teams would qualify for the finals. To our great surprise and delight, Monash ranked first in the semi-finals with a score of 34 while the other teams scored between 27-29. Now comes the final challenge.



Final-round jitters: The participants on-stage for the final challenge.

I was sweating profusely. The final round of the quiz was held onstage, in front of the audience and judges from different universities. We had to individually respond to short-answer questions within 40 seconds. Unlike previously, no discussions were allowed. It was undeniably difficult. The mood was sombre after the challenge and we could only pray that we at least made it to 3rd place. We initially thought our performance would only earn us the 4th place but when the results were announced, we leapt up with joy as Monash's school logo appeared on the screen as 2nd-runner up. It was then we knew we made history as the first Monash team to have ever won the National Pharmacy Quiz after so many years.

FINAL ROUND WINNERS FOR NATIONAL PHARMACY QUIZ (NPQ)

1ST PLACE: AIMST

2ND PLACE: IIUM

3RD PLACE: MONASH



Final ranking



Sweet victory: From right, Chai Chang Jian, Tan Oi Jin, Loy Yee Toeng and Fabian Moh Kim Guan

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Team Monash: From left, Liew Xin Wei, Irene Huang Yeu Xin, Ho Pei Qi, Loy Yee Toeng, Grace Kho Yu Ting, Fabian Moh Kim Guan, Chai Chang Jian, Ng Swee Li, Tan Oi Jin, Siew Liang Ching, Yim Yee Jin & Chiang Jing Yuen

**Have You Made A Cream Before From Scratch? Nope.
By: Ng Swee Li (Sally), Monash Pharmacy Year4**

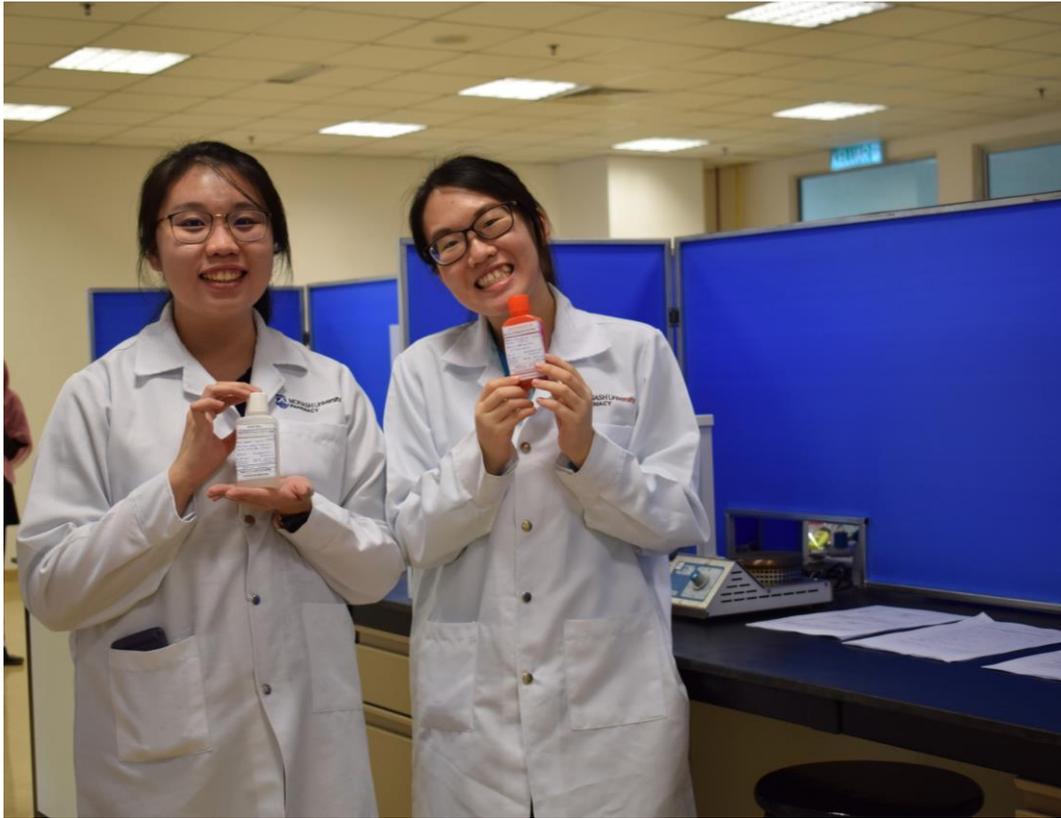
Pei Qi and I were initially panicking during the preliminary round of Piala Aishah. It was our first time using British Pharmacopoeia (BP). We were not able to find any formulae in the BP for the two products that we have to prepare within 90 minutes. Back in university, we mostly depended on the Australian Pharmaceutical Formulary in our extemporaneous practicals. After one hour of flipping the thick yet “unhelpful” references provided, we decided to just go by our instincts to prepare the products and complete the worksheets.

We tried our best and did not have high expectations to enter the final round of Piala Aishah. Secretly, we were hoping we would be awarded full marks for cleanliness since we had extra time to clean and wipe all the apparatus and bench instead of focusing on our products. After a seemingly endless wait for the results, we were shocked to know that we as Team Monash A was placed fourth out of the 19 teams in the preliminary. This qualified us to enter the final round of Piala Aishah with 7 other teams. Not bad despite just going by our instincts!



Figuring it out: Ho Pei Qi & Sally

In the final round, we were asked to prepare a cream from scratch. Again, we were not exposed to these compounding methods in our syllabus. Fortunately, both of us had been watching YouTube videos during the break in between rounds, and somehow learnt the steps to make cream by melting the wax and soft paraffin. Pei Qi and I tried our best, and thankfully, our teamwork and chemistry were excellent. We managed to prepare the cream and completed the worksheet within one hour. All we could do then was wait patiently and hope for the best, knowing that our scores would also influence whether our team would make it into the semi-finals.



All smiles: Ho Pei Qi (left) & Sally (right)

Reflecting back, taking part in the Piala Aishah competition was truly an eye-opening challenge. There were many memorable first-times. How many of our classmates can actually say they made a cream from scratch before? However, the icing on the cake was certainly the moment when we were announced as the 4th place winners, and therefore, our team, Monash A made it into the semi-finals of the National Pharmacy Quiz!

Special thanks to Ms Saw Pui San and Dr. Alice Chuah Lay Hong for giving us their precious time and guidance in our extemporaneous training session. We could not have done it without you!