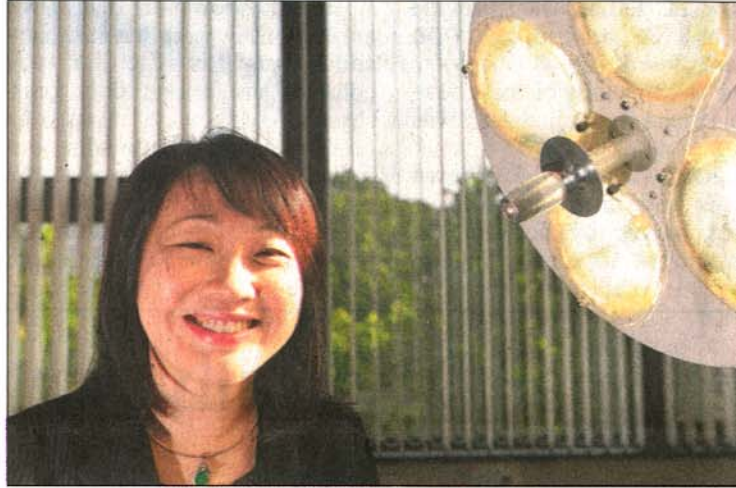


She's first doctor to earn SMU law degree



Dr Woon is currently taking the Bar course and wants to qualify as a lawyer. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

SURGEON Bertha Woon used to start operating on patients at 7am to make time for law classes.

The hard work has paid off. Today, the 39-year-old is the first medical doctor to graduate from the Singapore Management University's (SMU) three-year Juris Doctor programme.

She had signed up when she learnt in 2009 that the school had started a law course for graduates of other fields.

Her interest was piqued when she met foreign counterparts at a business school programme in France five years ago and noticed that foreign medical associations had legal professionals whereas Singapore's had none.

Dr Woon said this prompted her to seek legal knowledge "as there are a lot of medico-legal issues facing our region".

The Singapore Medical

Association council member joins 1,929 students who will graduate in eight ceremonies over the next three days.

This is SMU's largest cohort, topping the 1,813 last year.

They include the first batch of 29 Executive Master of Business Administration students, who are mostly senior executives.

Despite studying for a law degree full time, Dr Woon continued to run her practice and serve on three professional bodies. She shuttled between her surgery in Gleneagles Hospital and SMU's Bras Basah campus by public transport.

The punishing schedule has not deterred Dr Woon, who is single, from furthering her legal education.

She is currently taking the Bar course and wants to qualify as a lawyer.

MATTHIAS CHEW