

# SINGAPORE Health

AUG  
2018

**A SPECIAL  
EDITION  
ON NURSING**

by SINGHEALTH DUKE-NUS  
ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTRE  
MCI (P) 039/04/2018

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## CARE CLOSER TO HOME

These community  
nurses help seniors  
age comfortably in  
their neighbourhood

P3

PHOTO: ZAPHS ZHANG HAIR AND MAKEUP; WENNY LU & FELICIA NG

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# Keeping the community well

Beyond hospital walls, nurses are helping the population to keep well, get well and age well. By Lediati Tan



Senior Staff Nurse Imma Harliny Abdul Rahim on a home visit in Tampines with patient Mdm Mariam (centre) and her daughter-in-law and main carer, Mdm Zainab.

TEN DAYS AFTER 86-year-old Mdm Mariam was discharged from Changi General Hospital (CGH), Senior Staff Nurse Imma Harliny Abdul Rahim visited her to ensure that she was recovering well at home.

Mdm Mariam, who has multiple complex conditions such as dementia and Parkinson's disease, was hospitalised for fluid overload and aspiration pneumonia.

After her discharge, she was placed under CGH's Hospital-to-Home service – a service where a multidisciplinary team comprising community nurses, doctors and allied health professionals work together to provide post-discharge care to patients in the comfort of their homes.

During the visit, Imma, 36, noticed that Mdm Mariam had swallowing issues and difficulty coughing out phlegm, which resulted in her airways being blocked. She immediately referred Mdm Mariam to a speech therapist for her swallowing problems. She also ordered a suction machine for her to use at home.

"With Nurse Imma's help, our whole family learnt the right suctioning technique very quickly. She is very caring towards our mother, and is patient in guiding us," said Mdm Zainab, Mdm Mariam's daughter-in-law and main carer.

## CARE CLOSER TO HOME

With health care in Singapore shifting from hospital-centric care to community-based care, nurses like Imma play an increasingly vital role in keeping individuals well-supported in the community.

Every morning, after meeting with the multidisciplinary care team in the



**I ALWAYS TELL THEM NOT TO TREAT ME AS AN OUTSIDER OR A NURSE, BUT AS SOMEBODY THEY CAN COUNT ON.**

IMMA HARLINY ABDUL RAHIM,  
SENIOR STAFF NURSE,  
CHANGI GENERAL HOSPITAL

hospital to discuss cases, Imma sets out from CGH with a trolley bag containing medical equipment and supplies to visit patients who live in Tampines, Punggol, Pasir Ris and Sengkang. Her patients range from 40 to 100 years old, and suffer from complex conditions such as stroke, heart failure and dementia.

During these home visits, she checks their vital signs and provides nursing care such as wound management. She also finds out how their carers and families are coping, and sets goals for the patients' recovery.

Depending on the patients' needs, she refers them to a dietitian or speech therapist for follow-up care. She also checks the home environment for clutter, and recommends changes to make the space safer.

Even though Imma has 10 years' experience as a geriatric care nurse at CGH, she described the past year as one with a steep learning curve because she had to take on many other aspects of care when dealing with patients in the community.

"During home visits, you have to handle complex conditions independently and ask the right questions. It is usually only after a detailed assessment and examination that we are able to identify what the problems are, and work in partnership with patients and their families, and support them in the community."

It is not just in health care that Imma needs to be familiar with. She also needs to know and understand the various financial assistance schemes available for patients.

Despite the challenges, she feels an immense sense of satisfaction when her patients greet her with a smile and thank her for the support. "I always tell them not to treat me as an outsider or a nurse, but as somebody they can count on."

## LIKE A NEIGHBOUR, A FRIEND

Another care programme that is fast taking shape is the Community Nurse Post, where nurses are stationed at neighbourhood Senior Activity Centres or Family Service Centres to keep an eye on elderly residents who have little family support.

In the south-east of Singapore, a pioneer batch of community nurses from Singapore General Hospital (SGH) has been stationed at community nurse posts in mature estates like Redhill and Bukit Merah since February 2018. They offer elderly residents health and geriatric assessment, health education and care coordination with social care agencies for social support.

One such community nurse is Senior Staff Nurse Low Shi Chia, 26, who specialises in gerontology. A nurse for the past six years, she previously worked in SGH's medical ward.

"The work we do in the community focuses on optimising the health of the elderly so that they are able to receive care closer to their homes," said Shi Chia, who took on her new role as a community nurse in February 2018. She spends Wednesday mornings at NTUC Health's SilverACE Senior Activity Centre in Redhill and the rest of the week at Montfort Care's @27 Family Service Centre in Telok Blangah.

One of the patients she sees is 71-year-old Mdm See Tho, who suffers from diabetes, hypertension and other chronic problems. During her health assessment at the community nurse post, Shi Chia discovered that Mdm See Tho was not taking her medication correctly.

"In the hour that I spent with her, I went through her medication and taught her how to pack them correctly and when to take them. I also monitored her blood pressure and asked her to come to the post once a day to have her blood pressure monitored," said Shi Chia.

Under her watchful care, Mdm See Tho's blood pressure is well under control. Mdm See Tho is also able to correctly take her different sets of medication by herself.

In addition to attending to elderly residents at the community nurse post, Shi Chia conducts home visits for those who are home-bound. She sees around six residents every day, and currently has about 30 residents under her care.

Shi Chia said: "They come from diverse backgrounds and have different care needs. They open up more when they are in a familiar environment, and that helps me better understand what matters most to them, and find ways to help them take charge of their health. It has been very fulfilling."



Senior Staff Nurse Low Shi Chia with an elderly resident, Mdm See Tho, at a community nurse post in Telok Blangah.



# Happy Nurses' Day!

Our patients present with increasingly complex diseases, requiring care from many colleagues who work together to bring their special expertise. In SingHealth, our 10,500 nurses form the largest professional group. You are key to every team and you set the tone of how we collaborate as a family. You are the glue that binds teams together to provide the right care for our patients. Dear nurses, you are the **PRIDE OF SINGHEALTH!**

PROF IVY NG  
GROUP CEO, SINGHEALTH

Nurses, we're proud of the significant progress you've made and the success you've achieved on multiple fronts. You combine evidence-based practice with the art of caring to take your profession to greater heights. Thank you for ensuring that our patients remain well-supported and feel empowered, wherever they are.

PROF FONG KOK YONG  
DEPUTY GROUP CEO (MEDICAL & CLINICAL SERVICES), SINGHEALTH

A very Happy Nurses' Day to all our nurses, who contribute significantly to innovating care, enhancing patient safety, and elevating care delivery and outcomes for our patients! Thank you for your passion and dedication. You are truly our pride.

PROF KENNETH KWEEK  
DEPUTY GROUP CEO (ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION & INFORMATICS), SINGHEALTH & CEO, SINGAPORE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Words can never adequately convey our gratitude and appreciation for your contributions as you work on the front line and behind the scenes to deliver care that matters to patients. Your capabilities, commitment and compassion have made a difference, not just in the lives of patients and their families but also in the lives of fellow colleagues. Nurses, you are our everyday heroes!

ADJ PROF LEE CHIEN EARN  
DEPUTY GROUP CEO (REGIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM), SINGHEALTH & CEO, CHANGI GENERAL HOSPITAL

Dear nursing colleagues, on behalf of everyone at SNEC and SERI, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for your care and compassion. You touch the lives of our patients in so many ways, bringing them comfort every day. You are indeed very special. Happy Nurses' Day!

PROF WONG TIEN YIN  
DEPUTY GROUP CEO (RESEARCH & EDUCATION), SINGHEALTH & MEDICAL DIRECTOR, SINGAPORE NATIONAL EYE CENTRE

Nurses, you play a truly special role at every step of our patients' journey from illness to health. Your every act of caring, kindness and vigilance is vital to their successful recovery. My heartfelt thanks to all nurses for your unwavering commitment, invaluable contribution and compassion, all of which continue to inspire and touch lives daily on the front lines of health care.

PROF TERRANCE CHUA  
GROUP CHAIRMAN MEDICAL BOARD, SINGHEALTH & MEDICAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL HEART CENTRE SINGAPORE

Recently, I was a patient in our hospital. I had a rough ride and the team of nurses saved me. On top of doing everything competently and efficiently, their kind words and ever-present smiles, despite all the demands, stuck in my mind. Thank you.

PROF CHRISTOPHER CHENG  
CEO, SENGKANG GENERAL HOSPITAL

The nursing profession has always risen to the ever-evolving needs of society and blazed many trails in transforming health care. Our nurses are role models, collaborative change-makers and compassionate patient advocates. Thank you, nurses, for the wonderful difference that you make to the lives of patients and their loved ones.

PROF ALEX SIA  
CEO, KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

The influence you have on our patients' recovery should not be underestimated. Our patients often turn to you first when they need reassurance and words of comfort. We are grateful for all the love and care you have showered on them. Keep up the good work. Happy Nurses' Day!

PROF WILLIAM HWANG  
MEDICAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE SINGAPORE

Starched nursing caps and white uniforms with epaulets bring back fond memories, reminding us how the nursing profession innovates and reinvents itself to stay relevant. Nurses, thank you for staying true to your calling to provide the best care for our patients, with great compassion. You truly deserve our highest admiration and appreciation! Happy Nurses' Day!

ASSOC PROF POON CHOY YOKE  
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL DENTAL CENTRE SINGAPORE

Nurses, you have touched the lives of many – not just your patients but also their caregivers and families. Thank you for having a heart that never hardens, a spirit that never tires, and a touch that always comforts. We are inspired by your selflessness and professionalism. Happy Nurses' Day!

ASSOC PROF NG WAI HOE  
DEPUTY GROUP CHAIRMAN MEDICAL BOARD, SINGHEALTH & MEDICAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE

I am always inspired by our nurses. They connect with patients on a personal and professional level as they support them from admission to discharge, and even in their homes. They always comfort, assure and care. Nurses, we salute you for being the bedrock of health care. Happy Nurses' Day!

MS MARGARET LEE  
CEO, SINGHEALTH COMMUNITY HOSPITALS

Dear nurses, you are not only caregivers but cheerleaders and friends to our patients. This is especially so in primary care where you support patients and residents in the community to keep well, get well and age well. Thank you for your endless dedication to innovate and care for our communities.

DR ADRIAN EE  
CEO, SINGHEALTH POLYCLINICS



# Holding their own

There are many opportunities for professional growth because nursing specialties – from geriatrics to organ transplantation – are growing.  
By Lediati Tan

PHOTOS: ANGELA GUO, PHYLLICA WANG & ZAPHSZHANG

## SPECIALTY Midwifery

SPECIALISING IN midwifery, Samantha has 11 years of nursing experience behind her. Most of her time is spent at KKH's Delivery Suite managing normal deliveries, and at the Midwife-Led Clinic where she provides antenatal care for women with low-risk pregnancies.

In the Delivery Suite, she cares for women with low-risk pregnancies as well as those with high-risk pregnancies, including women with high blood pressure or when the baby is not growing at a normal rate. Her duties also include being on triage duty, where the multidisciplinary team assesses and manages women more than 22 weeks pregnant.

After delivery, Samantha provides postpartum care to mothers and newborns. She also teaches new mothers how to breastfeed and cope with caring for their infants. If complications arise during labour and delivery, she supports the obstetricians in managing these complications, and provides constant emotional support to the woman and her family. "I share the happiness of parents as they cradle their baby in their arms. It's a privilege to be involved. I just can't see myself doing any other job," said Samantha.



**SUPPORTING A WOMAN THROUGH SUCH A MAJOR MILESTONE IN HER LIFE IS VERY FULFILLING.**

SAMANTHA CHIA,  
NURSE CLINICIAN,  
KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



**AS NURSES, WE CAN HELP ENSURE THAT THE ELDERLY REMAIN WELL-SUPPORTED EVEN AFTER BEING DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL.**

JAMILAH KAMIS,  
SENIOR NURSE MANAGER,  
CHANGI GENERAL HOSPITAL

## SPECIALTY Geriatric Nursing

AS THE SENIOR Nurse Manager of a Geriatric and Rehabilitative Medicine Unit at CGH, Jamilah oversees a team of nurses caring for frail, elderly patients who require rehabilitation after strokes, traumatic accidents and surgeries. Geriatric nurses are also trained to attend to patients' mental and emotional well-being.

"They often feel frustrated or depressed due to ailing health, lack of independence and isolation from loved ones. Keeping a close eye on patients helps us build rapport with them and better understand their needs," she said.

Before patients are discharged from the hospital, Jamilah works with the multidisciplinary care team to plan post-discharge care based on their health and social needs. Outside of her hospital work, she is involved in an outreach project to build the capabilities of nursing homes in Advanced Care Planning, geriatric and end-of-life care. "When the elderly experience health problems, they often need more attention than others. That is why I'm passionate about advocating for elderly care and welfare," she said.



**HAVING THE MOST ONE-ON-ONE CONTACT WITH TRANSPLANT PATIENTS ALLOWS US TO FORM STRONG BONDS WITH THEM.**

CHUA SIEW HUANG,  
NURSE CLINICIAN,  
SINGAPORE GENERAL HOSPITAL

## SPECIALTY Hepato-pancreatobiliary (Liver Transplantation)

SINCE 2011, Siew Huang has cared for SGH patients who need surgery for the liver, pancreas, gallbladder and biliary duct. Her role now has expanded to include liver transplants. She goes on morning ward rounds with the multidisciplinary transplant team to review the condition of patients and make decisions about their care. After surgery, she checks their surgical wounds, and shows them and their caregivers how to recognise signs of potential infection.

Most afternoons, she is at the Transplant Centre's clinic, meeting patients, living donors and their families to explain what happens during surgery, the possible risks and the medication they will need. She explains how the transplant waiting list works and what happens when a matching organ is found.

After the transplant and discharge from hospital, she follows up on patients and donors to ensure they are coping well. She said: "It takes time to earn the trust of transplant patients. But it's worth it, especially when you help them enjoy a new lease of life."



## SPECIALTY Diabetes Management and Education

AT PASIR RIS Polyclinic, Lee Hua plays multiple roles in the war against diabetes. As a Care Manager, she works with doctors, dietitians and community partners to co-manage patients with diabetes and other chronic conditions. She attends to their follow-up care based on their personalised treatment plans. She ensures they go for their annual blood tests, and eye, foot and vascular screenings, to keep their conditions in check.

Lee Hua's specialised knowledge and skills allow her to also take on the role of Diabetes Nurse Educator. The job involves health counselling, and teaching patients how to self-inject insulin independently and manage their blood glucose levels by themselves. She also educates them on diet and exercise, and shows them how to identify early signs of diabetes-related complications.



**MY GREATEST SATISFACTION IS SEEING MY PATIENTS LEAD NORMAL LIVES, FREE FROM COMPLICATIONS.**

OU LEE HUA,  
NURSE CLINICIAN,  
SINGHEALTH POLYCLINICS - PASIR RIS



# Getting on the right track

Depending on individual strengths and inclinations, there are five career tracks that SingHealth nurses can choose from: clinical, management, education, research and informatics.

## CLINICAL

Kamini Devi  
Magesparan, 35

SENIOR STAFF NURSE,  
INFECTION PREVENTION  
AND CONTROL,  
SINGAPORE GENERAL  
HOSPITAL (SGH)

9 YEARS IN NURSING



2008

**ENROLLED NURSE**  
● *Nitec in Nursing*

I joined SGH's Internal Medicine ward as an Enrolled Nurse. After 10 months, I pursued a diploma at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

2011

**STAFF NURSE**  
● *Diploma in Nursing*

I became a Staff Nurse in the General Surgery, Trauma ward but put my career on hold to pursue a bachelor's degree at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

2017

**SENIOR STAFF NURSE**  
● *Bachelor of Science (Nursing)*

After graduating from NUS in 2013, I was posted back to the General Surgery, Trauma ward. Subsequently, I also had the chance to work in the Centre for Digestive and Liver Diseases for a year before being given an opportunity to join the Hospital Executive Programme, where I was posted to the Accreditation & Licensing Department. In 2017, I started specialising in Infection Prevention and Control. My work centres on patients and staff. I give education talks to staff and hold workshops. I also conduct audits to ensure staff comply with infection prevention guidelines and practices. My primary role is to keep patients and staff safe!

## MANAGEMENT

Wong Wei Yui, 51

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,  
NURSING,  
CHANGI GENERAL  
HOSPITAL (CGH)

30 YEARS IN NURSING



1989

**STAFF NURSE**

After my GCE A levels, I trained for three years at the School of Nursing to become a registered nurse. I spent my first nine years in nursing in the Orthopaedic ward at SGH and left as a senior staff nurse.

1998

**SENIOR STAFF NURSE**

After moving to the Acute Medical ward at CGH, I also studied part-time for a nursing degree at the Singapore Institute of Management, completing it in 2000. I wanted more exposure, so in 2002 I joined the Cardiac Catheterisation Lab.

2007

**NURSE CLINICIAN**  
● *Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing)*

I was promoted to Nurse Clinician in 2007, and in 2010, I received the CGH Formal Education Award to pursue a Master's in Health Administration (Flinders University, Adelaide) at Parkway College.

2013

**SENIOR NURSE MANAGER**  
● *Master of Health Administration*

At the Cardiac Catheterisation Lab, I managed nurses, and oversaw operations and nursing services. Three years later, my managerial scope expanded to include the Cardiology ward.

MAY 2018

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NURSING**

I now provide leadership, guidance and support to Same-Day Admission and Day Surgery wards and specialty procedure areas such as the Cardiac Catheterisation Lab and Endoscopy Centre.

## EDUCATION

Chua Lee Kheng, 44

ACTING ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR, NURSING  
(NURSING DEVELOPMENT  
UNIT), NATIONAL HEART  
CENTRE SINGAPORE

21 YEARS IN NURSING



1997

**STAFF NURSE**  
● *Diploma in Nursing*

I cared for patients recovering after heart and thoracic surgery in the Cardiothoracic Surgery and Cardiovascular Medicine High Dependency Unit and General ward. In 1998, I pursued a part-time Bachelor's in Health Science (Nursing) and graduated in 2000.

2000

**SENIOR STAFF NURSE (CLINICAL INSTRUCTOR)**  
● *Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing)*

While precepting junior nurses, I found my passion in teaching and chose my career path as a Clinical Instructor. In 2004, I pursued my Master's in Health Science (Education).

2006

**NURSE EDUCATOR**  
● *Master of Health Science (Education)*

In addition to teaching, I am responsible for curriculum development for basic and advanced skills nursing programmes.

2011

**SENIOR NURSE EDUCATOR**  
● *Graduate Diploma in Healthcare and Leadership*

My role expanded to include managerial duties and supervising Nurse Educators, Nurse Clinicians and Clinical Instructors.

2018

**AG ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NURSING (EDUCATION AND TRAINING)**

I oversee training and education matters, such as staff training and development, clinical attachment, and orientation programmes for new nurses.

## RESEARCH

Ang Mei Qi, 30

ASSISTANT NURSE  
CLINICIAN,  
DELIVERY SUITE,  
KK WOMEN'S AND  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

8 YEARS IN NURSING



2010

**STAFF NURSE**  
● *Bachelor of Science (Nursing) (Honours)*

When I was a final-year student nurse, I conducted a research study on the relationship between a woman in labour and her midwife. I went on to present the findings at two conferences after I joined KKH's Obstetrics and Gynaecology wards as a Staff Nurse.

2014

**SENIOR STAFF NURSE**  
● *Advanced Diploma in Midwifery*

One research project led to another. During my three years at KKH's Delivery Suite, I led a study on how applying a warm perineal pack can bring comfort to women in labour.

2017

**ASSISTANT NURSE CLINICIAN**

Under the KKH Nursing Research Fellowship Programme, I have protected time to carry out research to improve patient care. I am now Principal Investigator of a new study that explores the beliefs and self-care behaviour of women with gestational diabetes in Singapore. The findings aim to develop effective intervention to influence positive behavioural change, hence reducing the risk of the condition progressing to type 2 diabetes in the future.

## INFORMATICS

Lee Chen Kim, 30

SENIOR STAFF NURSE,  
NURSING INFORMATICS,  
SINGAPORE GENERAL  
HOSPITAL

9 YEARS IN NURSING



2009

**STAFF NURSE**  
● *Diploma in Nursing*

I started in the Urology ward, caring for patients after surgery. I was also the Informatics Liaison Nurse for the ward, supporting the roll-out of the Knowledge-Based Medication Administration system, which uses bar-code technology to reduce medication errors and improve patient safety.

2014

**SENIOR STAFF NURSE (INFORMATICS)**  
● *Bachelor of Science (Nursing)*

I am part of a team that actively finds IT solutions to improve productivity and patient safety. I have worked on projects including the Electronic Nursing Documentation, which allows nurses to document and track patients' conditions in real time, and lets them conduct electronic handover to the next shift. I also worked on the Nurses' Pal App version 2.0, which serves as a quick reference guide for diagnoses, treatment and patient education to aid nurses in decision-making.



# Learning beyond borders

Two nurses who were trained overseas under the Health Ministry's Health Manpower Development Plan reveal what they learnt. By Corinne Kerk

**A**FTER A SIX-WEEK clinical attachment in Canada last year, Malkit Kaur returned home with new ideas about a nurse-led discharge programme for patients recovering from anaesthesia after surgery.

Traditionally, patients at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH)'s operating theatres are reviewed and discharged back to the ward by anaesthetists.

As part of the operating theatre team's constant pursuit of enhancing patient care, they explored implementing a nurse-led discharge programme, which is practised in some renowned institutions around the world.

At Toronto General Hospital and The Hospital for Sick Children, Malkit saw that discharges were well-managed by nurses. The protocols and processes of nurse-led discharge programmes at both hospitals could be easily applied at KKH.

"A programme like this can potentially expand the clinical accountability of nurses in the operating theatre and free up anaesthetists' time, so that they can attend to patients with more complex needs," said Malkit.

Another thing she noticed during her stint in Canada was how nurses there spend more time talking to patients and putting them at ease

before and after surgery.

"The detailed communication really made a difference. You could tell that patients were very appreciative," she said.

Since her return, Malkit has put what she has learnt into practice here. With strong support from her colleagues in anaesthesiology and nursing, she developed a nurse-led discharge programme at KKH. It includes workflows, criteria for post-anaesthesia patient discharge, and a scoring system to assess the patient's vital signs, physical condition and suitability for discharge.

Nurses are now being trained before the programme is piloted in the operating theatre this year.



**THE DETAILED COMMUNICATION REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE AND PATIENTS WERE VERY APPRECIATIVE.**

MALKIT KAUR



Malkit Kaur, 48

NURSE CLINICIAN,  
OPERATING THEATRES

KK WOMEN'S AND  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



📍 Malkit Kaur (right) with her preceptor, Karen Rumball, from Toronto General Hospital.



Teo Wei Qin, 29

SENIOR STAFF NURSE,  
SURGICAL INTENSIVE  
CARE UNIT

SINGAPORE GENERAL  
HOSPITAL



📍 Under the guidance of her preceptor at Melbourne's Austin Hospital, Teo Wei Qin (right) had training stints in different departments.



**THE ATTACHMENT WAS VERY RELEVANT AND I COULD SEE MYSELF APPLYING THE NURSING PRACTICES I LEARNT THERE BACK AT SGH.**

TEO WEI QIN

**W**HILE ON ATTACHMENT at Melbourne's Austin Hospital, Teo Wei Qin had the chance to learn more about its advancements in haemodialysis.

The six-week programme was an eye-opener for the nurse, who has been looking after critically ill patients with kidney failure at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) for the past five years.

She saw how patients there benefitted from different types of dialysis – in particular, continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT). This is a form of continuous dialysis over 24 hours, usually used to treat critically ill patients with acute kidney failure.

She also learnt how using different types of blood thinners could help prevent clotting as blood moves through the dialysis machine.

Another important aspect of haemodialysis is the wash back procedure at the end of treatment where blood is returned to the patient's circulation. Wei Qin was impressed by how the hospital's dialysis machines were designed to return blood to the patients in a shorter time, without compromising their safety.

"The attachment was very relevant and I could see myself applying the nursing practices I learnt there back at SGH," she said.

Under the guidance of a preceptor at Austin Hospital, Wei Qin also had training stints in the renal ward, emergency medicine department and intensive care unit, where she worked with nurses from different cultural backgrounds.

Since her return, Wei Qin has embarked on a quality improvement project to improve the process of returning blood to patients during emergencies in CRRT.

"Time is of the essence for these patients. If we can reduce the time needed to return blood in dialysis and prevent clots during the process, they will really benefit," she said.



# EASY DOES IT

Fresh graduates often face stressful challenges in the first 12 months as they transit from being student nurses to registered nurses. The SingHealth College of Clinical Nursing offers a 12-month Graduate Nurse Integration Programme to smoothen the way, and ease them into their new roles and responsibilities.



WEEKS 1 TO 8

PHASE

1

## Orientation

- Transition to Care: A three-day programme covering topics such as SingHealth's vision, core values, policies and practices. Other topics include:

Induction:

- Roles and responsibilities of a registered nurse
- Infection control measures
- Staff and patient safety
- Nursing documentation
- General management of patients

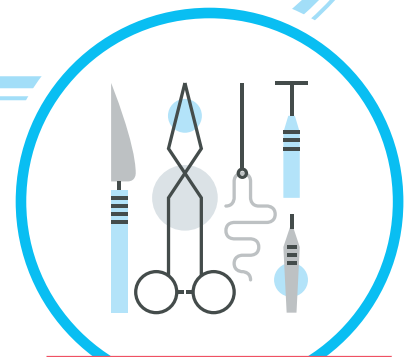
PHASE

2

## Core Skills Training

Key areas:

- Simulation training (Code Blue scenarios)
- Intravenous cannulation and venepuncture
- Intravenous administration of medication
- Management of patients based on specific specialities, such as Cardiology, Medical-Surgical, Neonatology, Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Paediatrics



WEEKS 9 TO 16



WEEK 17 ONWARDS

PHASE

3

## Professional Development and Mentorship

Key workshops and discussion forums:

- Leadership skills for problem-solving and decision-making
- Emotional intelligence
- Self-awareness
- Resilience
- Managing change
- Reflection and critical thinking
- Speaking up to ensure patient safety
- Stress management

### ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF CLINICAL NURSING

The College of Clinical Nursing (CCN) shapes and drives strategies for Clinical Nursing training and education initiatives across SingHealth. CCN oversees the development of Undergraduate Nursing Education, Postgraduate Nursing Education, Continuing Nursing Education and Global Nursing. The College advocates life-long learning, and empowers nurses with advanced clinical knowledge and expertise to enhance patient care. Through partnerships with local, regional and global health-care organisations, CCN offers multidisciplinary programmes that add value to the nurses' skill sets.



# A day in Suhaimi's shoes

Follow student nurse Muhamed Suhaimi Nasarudin for a day during his attachment at Singapore General Hospital.

By Lediati Tan

**B**E ADAPTABLE AND THINK on your feet! This is what student nurse Muhamed Suhaimi Nasarudin learnt during his attachment at Singapore General Hospital. The three-month stint helped him sharpen skills he had learnt in school, made him realise the importance of communication between nurses and patients, and taught him what it truly means to empathise with patients from all walks of life.

Guided by Jimmy Cainap Alisoso, Senior Staff Nurse in Ward 67, he cared for more than 120 adult patients recovering from surgical procedures such as total knee or hip replacements. He also cared for patients as young as 13 years old who were warded after surgery.



8.30am

## MAKING THE ROUNDS

Suhaimi greets every patient with a bright smile and administers their first round of medication before breakfast. Supervised by his preceptor, he carefully verifies the patient's identity, checks the type of medication and dosage, and administers the medication while explaining what each one is for.

## HANDS-ON HELPING



At the patient's bedside, Suhaimi checks vital signs such as blood pressure and heart rate. If there are abnormalities, he calls for the doctor. A finger-prick blood test is done for diabetic patients at least three times a day, depending on doctors' orders, to monitor their blood glucose levels.



To keep surgical wounds infection-free, he changes patients' wound dressings in the morning. For pain or swelling around the wound, doctors may ask nurses to apply an ice pack or strap a cryo cuff device, which circulates cold water, to soothe the affected area.



Other tools he uses to help patients recover after total knee replacement surgery include a Continuous Passive Motion device, which constantly moves the knee to prevent stiffness.

2.00pm

## TAKING STOCK

Before the end of his shift, Suhaimi shares any issues or difficulties he has faced today with his preceptor. It is also an opportunity for him to ask her for feedback or to clarify any questions he has.



☞ Suhaimi (second from right) with other nursing students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

7.00am

## AN EARLY START

Suhaimi usually arrives early. Before his eight-hour shift, he reads through patient records to update himself on their condition.

The day starts with a detailed handover from the nursing team on the night shift. This ensures continuity of care for patients assigned to him and his preceptor, Senior Staff Nurse Jimmy.



9.00am

## KEEPING TABS

Morning ward rounds led by the doctors usually end by 9am. This is also when the two nurses check the electronic medical records system for updates on patients' treatment plans and prioritise tasks ahead, such as dressing wounds.



10.30am

## TIME OUT

The two nurses usually get lunch from the food court and eat in the staff pantry. They take the time to rest and chat about the weekend or leisure activities.



11.30am

## WRAPPING UP

Under his preceptor's supervision, Suhaimi administers another round of medication to patients and attends to their needs. To ensure a smooth handover to nurses on the afternoon shift, he meticulously updates patients' records and changes to their condition. His preceptor checks his entries.



3.30pm

## HOMEWARD BOUND





# The power of two

Born just a year apart, these sisters have many things in common, including their love of nursing.

By Esther Au Yong

**A**S A CHILD, elder sister Jasmine Ek, 29, was drawn to nursing. It was her work that inspired her younger sibling, Jacqueline, to follow suit.

Both now work at Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC), where Jasmine is a Senior Staff Nurse caring for children with glaucoma, and Jacqueline a Staff Nurse taking care of elderly patients with retina issues.

Jasmine was only in Primary 2 when she noticed how the nurses took such good care of her very ill great-grandfather. "Even when his condition got worse, they kept him as comfortable as possible before he passed on," she recalled.

So when it was time for her to choose a course at the Institute of Technical Education, she knew it had to be nursing.



☞ All grown up: Senior Staff Nurse Jasmine Ek (far left) and her sister, Staff Nurse Jacqueline Ek, have shared a strong bond since young.

PHOTO: VERNON WONG

She completed her NITEC in Nursing and subsequently a Diploma in Nursing at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. From 2012 to 2015, Jasmine worked as a Staff Nurse at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, caring for infants and children in the General Surgery ward, before being transferred to SNEC.

## PAVING THE WAY

When Jacqueline joined nursing, she thought her elder sister might be

surprised by her decision. "She was worried I'd find it challenging, as I tend to shy away from talking. But instead of dissuading me, she advised me to try my best and turn to her if I needed help," said Jacqueline.

Working in the same field has been good for both of them. For Jacqueline, her elder sister is a mentor and a source of support. "When you look after patients, you can't help but feel for them. I used to bring my feelings of sadness

or frustration home. It really affected me. As a young nurse, having my sister to confide in helped me manage those emotions. Her best advice was to let go of things I could not control and have patience."

For Jasmine, having common ground brings them even closer. "We never run out of things to tell each other. We share what we have learnt, debate issues, and sometimes come up with solutions together," she said.

☞ Heart-warming: Assistant Nurse Clinician Albert Lew and his son, Staff Nurse Melvin Lew, share a passion for nursing.



PHOTO: VERNON WONG

# Like father, like son

While working in the same field is a wonderful bonus, this father and son duo are clear that they chose nursing to help others.

By Esther Au Yong

**E**VEN THOUGH HE SPENT more than 35 years in a fulfilling nursing career, he never thought his son should follow in his footsteps.

Like many doting parents, Albert Lew, Assistant Nurse Clinician, National Heart Centre Singapore (NHCS), was unsure if his son could withstand the pressures and demands of the job.

So when his firstborn, Melvin, said that he wanted to be a nurse, Albert and his wife, who is also a trained nurse, tried to dissuade him and suggested other professions like engineering.

But Melvin was not swayed. He asked a key question that got his father's blessing to go ahead: "If you can do it, why can't I?"

Albert said: "My wife and I realised we were being overprotective and decided to fully support him. We knew he had what it takes to be a good nurse."

## A FAMILY OF NURSES

In 2015, Melvin was sponsored by NHCS to pursue a nursing degree at the

National University of Singapore. After graduating 10 months ago, Melvin, 25, is now a Staff Nurse looking after heart patients in the High Dependency Unit. Patients here need more intensive observation, treatment and nursing care than those in a general ward.

"I love caring for my patients, and it is a joy to see them recover and get discharged," he said.

This caring nature has always bonded the Lew family. "I grew up listening to my parents talk about their work and experiences as nurses. They have been my inspiration and mentors."

Melvin's younger brother, Marcus, who is currently serving as a medic in national service, is also keen to join nursing. "We might have a family of nurses!" said Albert.

The Lews are often approached by relatives and friends for medical advice. "We're happy to help," said Albert. "And if they need specialist care, since we know, we can point them in the right direction."



# Happy to change lanes

Find out how these individuals followed their hearts and made a switch to nursing. By Corinne Kerk



Khairunnisa Jumat, 33  
STAFF NURSE,  
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT,  
SENGKANG GENERAL  
HOSPITAL (SKH)

**PREVIOUS INDUSTRY:**  
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

AT 21, KHAIRUNNISA was accepted into medical school, but after an injury, she gave up her dream of becoming a doctor and pursued a career in management consultancy instead. “But that sense of purpose and desire to help others in need never left me,” she said. In 2012, she took a leap of faith, quit her job and enrolled in nursing school.

After graduating from King’s College London in 2016, she joined SKH at Alexandra Hospital’s 24-hour Acute Care Clinic. She was part of a pioneer batch of nurses who helped set up the hospital’s Emergency Department, which is due to open later this year.

As an emergency nurse, she enjoys the fast-paced environment that requires her to recognise life-threatening conditions, prioritise patient care, and carry out resuscitative actions quickly while remaining calm. She encourages anyone considering a career switch to nursing to go for it. “Nursing is a profession with diverse career tracks, where you can chart your own career growth and development. The skills and experience you bring from other fields of work will always be valuable.”

YING JIE HAD always wanted to be a nurse, but her father wanted her to obtain a degree in banking and finance. She acceded to his wishes and became a tax specialist instead.

While expecting her first child, she was so moved by the care of KKH midwives that she decided to switch careers. She pursued a Professional Conversion Programme at Nanyang Polytechnic and joined KKH as a registered nurse in 2007. She later obtained an Advanced Diploma in Midwifery and became a certified Lactation Consultant. In 2015, she joined the Nurses Development Unit to focus on research as well as to educate and mentor nurses.

She is a recipient of this year’s Healthcare Humanity Award (Honourable Mention), given to outstanding health-care workers and those who go beyond the call of duty. “If I’d stayed in my previous job, I’d never have felt the satisfaction I now experience. I cannot put into words the wonderful feeling of nursing people back to health. It has helped me appreciate life much more!”



Chua Ying Jie, 45  
SENIOR STAFF NURSE,  
NURSES DEVELOPMENT  
UNIT, KK WOMEN’S  
AND CHILDREN’S  
HOSPITAL (KKH)

**PREVIOUS JOB:**  
TAX SPECIALIST

IN HIS PREVIOUS JOB in manufacturing, Choon Hua yearned for a role with more human interaction. Six years later in 2003, after he quit and was job-hunting, the SARS outbreak struck. He became a part-time health screener at a hospital, observing how nurses dealt with the crisis. It fuelled his interest in nursing. Spurred on by his wife, he joined the Professional Conversion Programme at Nanyang Polytechnic in 2004.

He started as a staff nurse at CGH’s Cardiac Catheterisation Laboratory, taking care of patients undergoing invasive procedures. In 2013, he began specialising in Nursing Informatics and has since been implementing systems to make work processes more efficient, training nurses to use the systems and conducting clinical data analysis to improve patient safety.

He said: “Nursing has taught me to be caring, more tolerant and less judgemental. It has so many diverse paths. You will always find an area you’ll like to work in.”



Goh Choon Hua, 45  
SENIOR STAFF NURSE,  
NURSING INFORMATICS,  
CHANGI GENERAL HOSPITAL  
(CGH)

**PREVIOUS JOB:**  
ENGINEERING ASSISTANT

## Happy Nurses' Day!

Nurses create a caring, healing environment for patients, and provide comfort and support to their families. Warm human interaction continues to be the hallmark of the nursing profession, even as technology takes on an increasingly important part in health-care delivery. With the changing health-care landscape, nursing will continue to evolve to meet the population’s changing needs. As we celebrate Nurses’ Day, we acknowledge and thank you, nurses, for your hard work and giving your best!

As nurses, you are the voice to lead and advocate for care that matters most to patients, families and communities. You take into account their emotional and social needs, beyond the health issues that you’re helping to address. As you adapt to changing needs and take on expanded roles, stay true to your calling to care and comfort always. Thank you, dear nurses, for inspiring us with your high standards of professionalism, camaraderie and resilience!



MS TAN SOH CHIN  
CHIEF NURSING OFFICER,  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH



DR TRACY CAROL AYRE  
GROUP CHIEF NURSE,  
SINGHEALTH & CHIEF NURSE,  
SINGAPORE GENERAL HOSPITAL



PAULIN KOH  
DEPUTY GROUP CHIEF  
NURSE, SINGHEALTH &  
CHIEF NURSE, CHANGI  
GENERAL HOSPITAL



NG GAIK NAI  
DEPUTY GROUP CHIEF  
NURSE, SINGHEALTH  
& CHIEF NURSE,  
KK WOMEN’S AND  
CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL



CHRISTINA LIM  
CHIEF NURSE,  
SENGKANG GENERAL  
HOSPITAL



AMY TAY  
CHIEF NURSE,  
NATIONAL HEART  
CENTRE SINGAPORE



STEPHANIE TEO  
CHIEF NURSE,  
SINGHEALTH  
POLYCLINICS



STEPHANIE YEAP  
DIRECTOR, NURSING,  
SINGHEALTH COMMUNITY  
HOSPITALS



LIAN SIEW BEE  
DIRECTOR, NURSING,  
NATIONAL CANCER  
CENTRE SINGAPORE



LOW SIEW NGIM  
DIRECTOR,  
NURSING, SINGAPORE  
NATIONAL EYE CENTRE



YEHO BEE CHIN,  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
NURSING, NATIONAL DENTAL  
CENTRE SINGAPORE



NG WAI MAY  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,  
NURSING, NATIONAL  
NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE

PHOTO: ANGELA GUO

PHOTO: ANGELA GUO

PHOTO: PHYLLIS WANG



# THINKING BIG

These innovative initiatives by nurses are helping them to care better for patients. By Esther Au Yong



Senior Enrolled Nurse Mazilina Senin was one of the nurses who worked on improving the sterilisation protocol and processes at NDCS.

## Enhancing sterilisation of dental instruments

National Dental Centre Singapore

THE CENTRAL SUPPLIES UNIT of National Dental Centre Singapore (NDCS) processes more than 86,000 pieces of surgical dental instruments every month. Located in the basement of the NDCS building, this little-known unit with five nurses and 13 health-care assistants is responsible for cleaning, sorting and sterilising all dental instruments to keep them infection-free.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve patient safety and infection control, NDCS nurses worked with their counterparts from Singapore General Hospital's Theatre Sterile Supplies Unit

to review the sterilisation protocol and processes at NDCS.

"All dirty instruments are collected via designated lifts from the clinics located at different levels. After washing and drying, these instruments are wrapped in a paper sterilisation wrap or packed into see-through pouches. The pouches have an external chemical indicator that turns black upon complete and proper sterilisation," said Senior Enrolled Nurse Mazilina Senin. "We have since introduced an internal indicator within the sterilisation wrap to ensure easy and accurate identification."

The team also adopted the use of sticky labels to indicate the date of sterilisation and load number on the pouches. The previous method, which involved ink stamping on the sterilisation pouches, sometimes resulted in smudged or unclear dates.

Monitoring of the sterilisation process was also enhanced through the use of a biological indicator, which ensures faster and more reliable monitoring of steam sterilisation processes. It is done for every load to ensure that all items that undergo the process are sterile before they are dispatched for use.

On the improvements made at the post-sterilisation stage, Mazilina said: "We have implemented a first-in, first-out method, where sterilised items are now placed on different trolleys according to the date of sterilisation. This enables staff to have quick access to the items sterilised earlier to be dispatched first."

To help new staff identify instruments correctly for packing, the team is now in the process of creating pictorial guides for them.



Dental instruments are wrapped in a paper sterilisation wrap or packed into see-through pouches before undergoing the sterilisation process.

## Making ICU stay a better experience for caregivers

Sengkang General Hospital

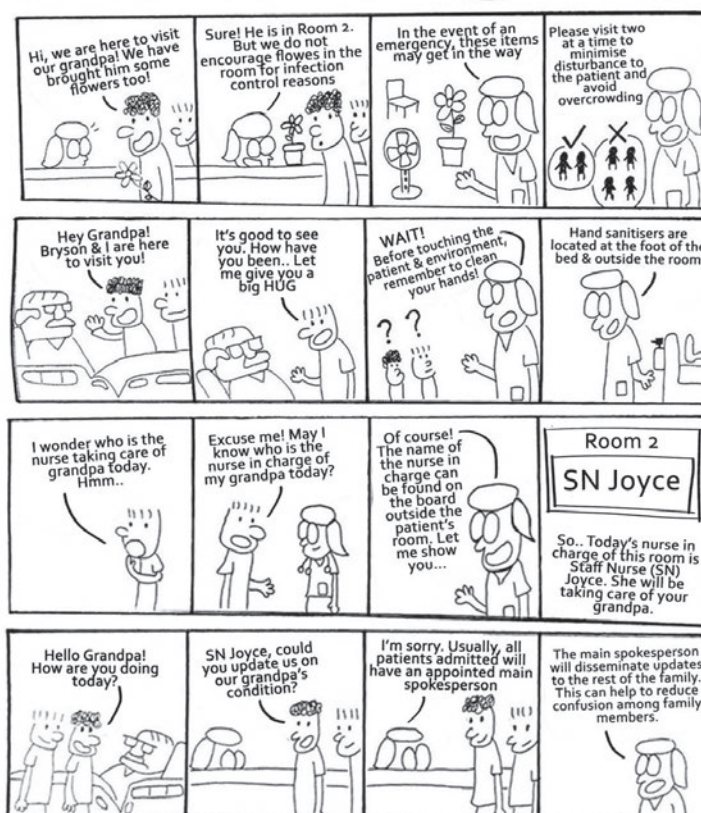
The stress of having a loved one in the intensive care unit (ICU) can overwhelm family members. Understandably, they are unlikely to take in the mass of information given to them during the ICU orientation.

To help them understand the workings of the ICU and what their loved ones are going through, nurses at Sengkang General Hospital created an orientation pack consisting of an information pamphlet on the ICU and the health-care team.

ICU orientation posters and comic strips were also put up in a prominent location for visitors to view while they are waiting to see the patient.

They found that the readily available information helped reduce the anxiety of family members, while nurses had more time to attend to their patients as family members did not approach them as much as before.

## A DAY AT THE HOSPITAL...





## Taking steps to prevent falls

Bright Vision Hospital

FALLS ARE ONE OF THE most frequently reported clinical incidents at hospitals around the world that can lead to longer hospital stays.

To help prevent falls by their mostly elderly patients, a team of nurses at Bright Vision Hospital (BVH) took a series of steps, including putting those most at risk in the same ward and staggering break times, so that the ward is adequately staffed at all times.

“Since we implemented the measures, the number of inpatient falls has been reduced by 66 per cent,” said team leader Nursing Officer Yeung Chee Yan.

One of the first things the team did was to identify patients who had a high chance of falling, including those with a history of recurrent falls, or who suffer

from conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.

They are then admitted to a ward equipped with fall prevention equipment. The ward is also staffed with more nurses, allowing closer monitoring of these patients.

“Grouping patients with a high risk of falling in the same ward allows nurses to focus on their needs,” she said. “At the same time, nurses in other wards can pay more attention to other aspects of care for better rehabilitation of those patients.”

In addition, more manpower was assigned to these wards, and break times for the staff were staggered so that at least four team members are always on duty. This is particularly useful during the evening shift between 5.30pm and 8pm, when patients are more active.

The hospital also added new Tango commode chairs and heavy-duty geriatric chairs with special features for extra safety.



➤ Nursing Officer Yeung Chee Yan (centre) and Senior Staff Nurse Anna Lorainne Evangelista (left) helping a patient use a heavy-duty geriatric chair.

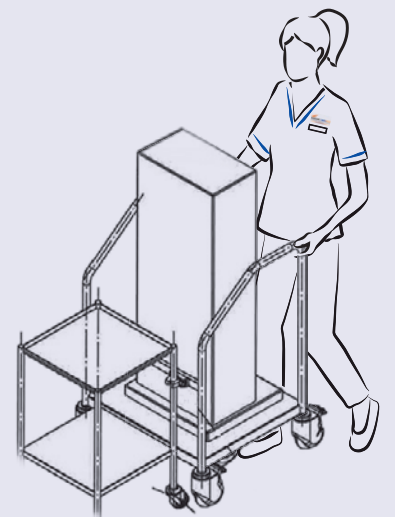


➤ Senior Nurse Clinician Tay Beng Choo (centre) with nurses from Assisi Hospice.



**WHILE I WAS THERE TO SHARE MY EXPERTISE, I FELT VERY INSPIRED BY THE HOSPICE NURSES.**

TAY BENG CHOO,  
SENIOR NURSE CLINICIAN,  
NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE SINGAPORE (NCCS) AND ASSISI HOSPICE



## Turning heavy lifting into smart lifting

Singapore General Hospital (SGH)

When patients who can’t walk well need to undergo dialysis, nurses have to move heavy dialysis machines to the ward for dialysis by their bedside. Pushing these machines, which weigh more than 100kg, can strain or injure their shoulders and back. To overcome this problem, nurses at SGH worked with the institution’s engineers to mount the machines on motorised trolleys for easy manoeuvrability. With levers and a foot-operated tow bar, the trolleys help the nurses move the machines quickly and effortlessly. Patients, too, enjoy a shorter wait for the dialysis.

## Inspired by those she trains

National Cancer Centre Singapore and Assisi Hospice

SENIOR NURSE CLINICIAN Tay Beng Choo from National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) was seconded to Assisi Hospice to help with the nursing service there. This included setting up infection prevention processes and three new wards for patients with life limiting illnesses who require inpatient

care. This secondment was part of a service contract between NCCS and Assisi Hospice.

With more than 20 years’ experience, Beng Choo also helped to train the hospice’s nurses, equipping them with knowledge and skills on palliative care nursing and patient communication. “We often serve as patients’ first line of communication and help coordinate many aspects throughout their treatment. Attention to detail is critical,” she said.

For the past 2½ years, she coached and worked closely with nurses and nursing leaders to ensure that the

three new wards, which opened progressively in January 2017, June 2017 and May 2018, run smoothly.

She also initiated a quality improvement project to look at ways of preventing pressure injuries among palliative patients who are bed-bound.

She said: “While I was there to share my expertise, I felt very inspired by the hospice nurses. The nature of work is often very physically and emotionally demanding. It really takes a special person to be able to help terminally ill patients live out their final days in comfort, and prepare them and their families for their death.”



# Creating an impact

Nurses who volunteer for overseas medical missions return home with skills, knowledge and enriching experiences. By Corinne Kerk



Senior Staff Nurse Adele Woon helping elderly villagers in Thailand.



## SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

KAMPONG CHHNANG in Cambodia holds a special place in the heart of Nurse Clinician Rajammal P K.

The 49-year-old has visited the province five times to share best practices of neonatal resuscitation and paediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation with health-care teams there. "It's very rewarding to know that the Cambodian team was able to save more lives using skills we taught them," said Rajammal, who works in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH).

She sees these trips as a great opportunity to share KKH's evidence-based nursing practices, despite the challenges of language barriers and working with limited resources.

With support from family and colleagues, she also donates food, clothing, toys and books to orphans in Cambodia and India.

"I hope to do more to help. These missions have helped me be a more empathetic person and better understand the struggles that developing countries face," said Rajammal.

Locally, she uses her nursing skills as a volunteer at nursing homes and to help stroke survivors at the non-profit Stroke Support Station.



The trip was an eye-opener and the forerunner of others that followed.

Five years later, she returned to Yunnan as part of an outreach programme by nursing students from the National University of Singapore (NUS). There, she taught the locals about sexually transmitted diseases, basic hygiene and dental care.

Since then, the 28-year-old has been on five overseas mission trips. Her latest was to Khek Noi, Thailand, with Project Light, organised by the NUS nursing alumni to promote the spirit of volunteerism.

Led by a fellow NCCS nurse, the team of one doctor and seven nurses linked up with a local non-governmental organisation to do medical humanitarian work in rural Thailand.

There, they visited less mobile elderly villagers at home and conducted basic medical examinations. They also set up a mobile clinic, where they attended to about 100 patients in two days, and taught villagers cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid.

On her days off, Adele volunteers at a non-profit organisation, which attends to the medical needs of foreign migrant workers. She is also a befriender with a children's cancer organisation.

"Missions have helped broaden my horizon. By understanding different people and different cultures, you can learn how to become a better person and a better nurse," she said.

## STARTING YOUNG

HER FIRST TRIP as a teenage volunteer to Yunnan, China, whetted her appetite for more volunteer work.

Since young, Senior Staff Nurse Adele Woon, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), had always been interested in volunteering, and frequently took part in her school's outreach programmes. So, naturally, when her junior college was raising funds to build a road for a village in Yunnan, she happily joined in.

"The new road helped connect the remote village to the main roads, so farmers could sell their produce further away and children could easily walk to school," she said. While there, the students also taught the villagers some English and personal hygiene.



Nurse Clinician Rajammal P K teaching doctors and nurses infant CPR during an acute paediatric emergency care course in Kampong Chhnang, Cambodia.



(Left) Rajammal giving an elderly resident facial therapy and (right) at a gaming session with a resident (in wheelchair) at St Joseph's Home.



# wherever they go



Senior Staff Nurse Siti Raudah Matinee (top, left) and Nurse Clinician Poon Lai Kuan (bottom, far right) at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



## EVERY TRIP A FULFILLING ONE

MEDICAL MISSIONS inevitably mean making personal sacrifices. But this has not deterred Senior Staff Nurse Siti Raudah Matinee, 34, and Nurse Clinician Poon Lai Kuan, 39, both from Singapore General Hospital's (SGH) Major Operating Theatre department.

"Being able to help those in need makes everything worthwhile," said Lai Kuan, who has been on the hospital's medical missions to Vietnam, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Indonesia and China since 2004.

In 2014, they went to Dhaka, Bangladesh, where they worked with SGH surgeons to treat patients who needed plastic and burns surgery at the Combined Military Hospital. It involved getting the operating theatre ready and assisting the plastic surgeons during surgery. The team also conducted training on infection prevention and sterilisation in the operating theatre.

Since then, both nurses have been on three trips to Dhaka.

Their most recent in November 2017 was part of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Bangladesh Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and SingHealth to develop capabilities in burns treatment.

Supported by Temasek Foundation International, the aim was to train 300 specialists and 10 hospital leaders in reconstructive surgery, and surgical wound management of massive burns and rehabilitation.

Siti is always awestruck on these trips by the high spirits of the local nurses. "Their enthusiasm and hunger to learn leaves a lasting impression, and has inspired me to do even better as a nurse."

Both agree that mission trips make them appreciate life more. "They teach us to be humble and more sensitive. Nothing in life comes easy, but lending a helping hand puts a smile on your face and on those of others," said Lai Kuan.

## ADAPTING ON THE SPOT

WHEN ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE Tan Il Fan, 37, and Nurse Clinician Fu Liqing, 34, from National Neuroscience Institute were asked by Dr Umapathi Thirugnanam, Senior Consultant, Department of Neurology, to join an overseas medical mission to Myanmar, they saw it as a great opportunity to help.

The trip, their first, was to Yangon General Hospital to train nurses there in stroke care.

Since then, they have joined medical missions to Laos and Vietnam to conduct training in stroke care, including hyper-acute stroke management. This included nursing care in an acute stroke unit, post-stroke rehabilitation, neurological nursing assessment tools, and caregiver training and education.

Often on these trips, lesson plans have to be quickly adapted to match resources and practices at each hospital. "We improvise on the spot and come up

with new ways of teaching," said Il Fan.

For example, some hospitals are unable to provide nutritional milk feeds to patients who need nasogastric tube feeding. In place of milk feeds, nurses there would blend porridge and meat for their patients.

Once, they saw a caregiver trying to put blended food into a patient's tube when the tube was already dislodged from the stomach. They immediately stopped the caregiver, alerted the nurse-in-charge, and went on to include nasogastric tube feeding as part of the teaching session.

"It was not in our lesson plan but we worked with the nurses on how best to include it. In less than half a day, we managed to reschedule our timetable and squeeze in a timeslot to teach the nurses how to educate caregivers on tube placement," said Liqing. The team later brainstormed and came up with a simplified version of tube placement and patient-safety teaching materials.

"We learn to appreciate different nursing practices from different cultures. We come from different hospitals but we share the common goal of providing our patients with the best care," said Liqing.



Advanced Practice Nurse Tan Il Fan (left) conducting a workshop on stroke care.

Nurse Clinician Fu Liqing (fourth from left) with nurses in Myanmar.





# NURSING MYTHS DEBUNKED

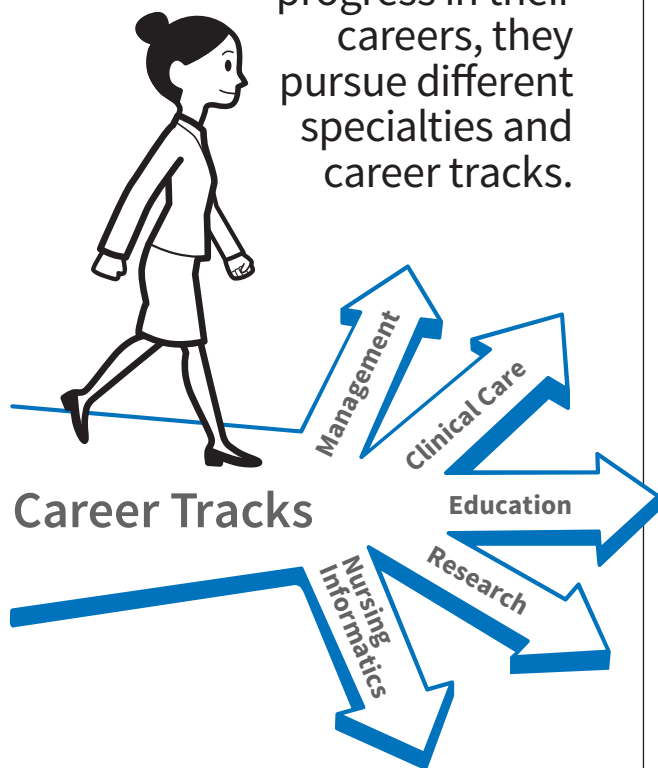
SingHealth has more than 10,500 dedicated and highly skilled nurses for whom nursing is a fast-paced and dynamic career. Find out the truths about nursing and how it is a fulfilling career.

## MYTH

Nursing is a menial job.

## FACT

A nurse's role goes beyond providing care and comfort to patients. As they progress in their careers, they pursue different specialties and career tracks.



## MYTH

**MEN DON'T BECOME NURSES.**

## FACT

Singhealth has more than

# 800

male nurses.

With diverse opportunities, nursing is a fulfilling job for men who want to make a difference in people's lives. They often excel in areas such as emergency nursing and nursing informatics.

## MYTH

**Nurses are stuck at hospitals.**

## FACT

Nursing is a highly skilled and well-rounded profession. Nurses are sought after by hospitals, polyclinics, nursing homes and hospices, and go beyond hospital walls to serve the community.



## MYTH

Nurses only take orders from doctors.

## FACT

Nurses are part of multidisciplinary care teams, working together to care for patients. Their roles have expanded, and they make independent care decisions based on guidelines and protocols.



## MYTH

**Learning stops once you leave school.**

## FACT

Nursing has a strong emphasis on continuous learning.

# 46%

of Singhealth nurses have advanced their careers with a bachelor's or master's degree in nursing, or a PhD.

## MYTH

You have to start young if you want to become a nurse.

## FACT

It's never too late to start. Mid-career professionals who want to switch to nursing can apply for the Professional Conversion Programme, offered by Workforce Singapore. Visit [www.tinyurl.com/PCP-nursing](http://www.tinyurl.com/PCP-nursing) for more information.

