

# From playing doctor to med school

Former madrasah student awarded Berita Harian Inspiring Young Achiever

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**She persevered, even though no Islamic religious school student has made it to medical school here.**

When Ms Amalina Ridzuan did badly in her A levels, she did not give up. Instead, she enrolled in a polytechnic and worked harder.

Today, the 22-year-old is one of the first two students from an Islamic religious school, or madrasah, to be admitted to the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

For her achievement, Ms Amalina won the Berita Harian Inspiring Young Achiever Award yesterday at a gala dinner at the Raffles City Convention Centre.

She told *The New Paper*: "I am really humbled to get this award... All I did was pursue my dream, and I hope this will inspire others to do

the same, regardless of their background."

For Ms Amalina, becoming a doctor was something she had always wanted. The oldest of five children, she remembers playing doctor with her siblings as a child.

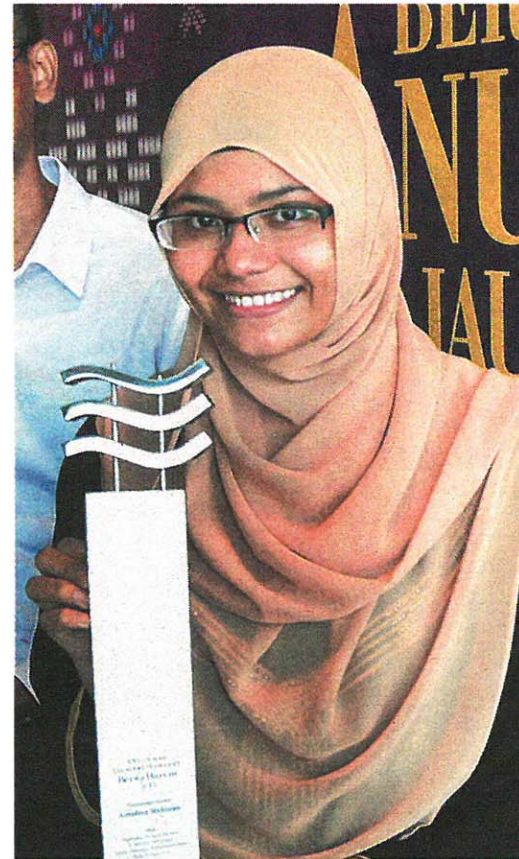
Her passion for medicine was ignited when she was a student at Madrasah Al-Ma'arif Al-Islamiah and she read an article about a cancer patient.

## HELP PEOPLE IN PAIN

"I read about how much pain the patient was in and since then, I felt compelled to help people alleviate their pain."

But having studied the full 10 years at a madrasah, Ms Amalina was uncertain about taking the junior college path to pursue her interest in medicine.

She said: "I had my reservations due to the different cultures between secular schools and madrasahs. Eventually I decided to give it a try if it meant getting closer to my dream."



PHOTOS: BERITA HARIAN



**I always told myself you'd never know until you've tried.**

— Ms Amalina Ridzuan (left), on persevering despite being told she should be realistic about her expectations

Ms Amalina enrolled in the science stream at Serangoon Junior College in 2009.

But she felt demoralised by her poor A-level examination results and considered doing a private degree.

"I thought carefully about my options and realised that what I needed was a fresh start."

She enrolled in Temasek Polytechnic to study biomedical science.

During her three years in the polytechnic, there were times when she wanted to give up, especially when people told her that she should be realistic about her expectations.

"Sometimes what they said affected me, but I always told myself you'd never know until you've tried."

She graduated from Temasek Polytechnic with a grade point average of 3.98 out of 4, which earned her a place at NUS.

She attributes her success to her parents. "Not once have they ever questioned my decision to enter polytechnic or told me to stop," she said.