

# Nursing their way to a career switch

The Bachelor of Science (Nursing) Professional Conversion Programme allows mid-career Singaporeans a chance to be nurses. Three of them tell **CHEOW SUE-ANN** why they made the switch



Mr Dave Hio, 46, was a sales and operations manager in the marine and offshore sector, managing a team of over 100 people.

But in 2017, he felt he was ready for a different type of challenge.

The mechanical engineering graduate holds a degree from Glasgow University and a master's from the National University of Singapore.

After working for 22 years – 10 in the defence industry and 12 in the marine and offshore industry – he wanted a job where he could help others.

He felt like he was not getting satisfaction from work, and he said: "It was just all about selling people something, sometimes not even things they need or want, and it was all about meeting targets."

The father of two knew he needed a job switch to be happy,

so he turned to the healthcare sector.

Mr Hio is currently undergoing training at the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

He is part of the inaugural batch of 34 trainees, and they will graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing upon completion of the two-year accelerated programme next year.

Mr Hio said: "You might start at the bottom, but as you learn and are able to gain expertise, the respect will be earned."

He said the career switch was not as shocking as many might expect.

There were transferable skills he could bring over from his previous job.

Mr Hio said: "Like in sales, there is a need to target the approach towards different clients. In the same way, I am able to adjust the way I approach each patient, deciding what would work best for each person."

## COMPASSION

He said that since starting his nursing course about half a year ago, he has found himself learning to be more compassionate and sympathetic.

He added: "In engineering, you don't need to think about how machines feel or understand them. But I have since learnt to understand people and their circumstances better."

He said the biggest difference was having to give up his previous pay package.

While his wife was initially hesitant about the switch, she supported him after under-



(From left) Mr Muhammad Rusydi, Ms Joan Lim and Mr Dave Hio are part of the first batch of trainees for the Bachelor of Science (Nursing) Professional Conversion Programme. TNP PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAWDHARY

standing that his new career would help him feel more fulfilled and happy.

He said: "It is never too late to do what you like, and sometimes you just have to take that leap of faith."

"Even at training, every day I feel appreciated."

"And having the immediate feedback from patients helps me feel like I am learning every day and gives me that sense of accomplishment."

sueannc@sph.com.sg

*"It is never too late to do what you like, and sometimes you just have to take that leap of faith."*

– Mr Dave Hio

## He saw 'textbook come to life' when son had jaundice

He had wanted to be a nurse after completing his A-level examinations.

But Mr Muhammad Rusydi, 31, was not accepted into the course, so he studied economics and management at the Singapore Institute of Management.

He then worked in sales.

Last year, just as he was about to welcome his child, Mr Rusydi was given a second chance to pursue his dream.

He said: "Seeing my mother, who was a dedicated nurse for over 30 years, and all the cards and appreciation she got from her patients, inspired me."

When the option to re-enter university to study to be a nurse opened up, he jumped at the chance, despite knowing that he was in for a big lifestyle change.

Mr Rusydi says his training as

a nurse has also helped him be a better father. For example, he now knows how to bathe his three-month-old son.

He said: "My child was hospitalised for severe jaundice, and we happened to be studying that topic at the time."

"It was like seeing everything from my textbook come to life."

But making the switch has not been easy, he said.

He recounted a comment that stuck with him: "Why do you study so hard at NUS (National University of Singapore) just to be a nurse?"

He added: "This perception of nurses not needing a degree, or of nursing as something anybody can do, is still out there."

"All we can do is to learn and show (the naysayers) that the knowledge and experience counts towards something."

– CHEOW SUE-ANN