

Dad and daughter go into nursing together

He was a lecturer, she was inspired by nurses who helped her through cancer

CHEOWSUE-ANN

He might be 49, but Mr Joshua Liew, a former lecturer at Temasek Polytechnic's Centre for Character and Leadership Education, along with his 17-year-old daughter Ophelia Liew, have just entered their first year of nursing school.

While helping his daughter research her career options in nursing, he stumbled upon a professional conversion course for himself and decided to take up nursing to live out a passion he always had.

Mr Liew is one of about 1,300 mid-career locals who have participated in the nursing professional conversion programmes (PCP), including the PCP for registered nurses (degree), PCP for registered nurses (diploma) and PCP for enrolled nurses, to make a switch into nursing since 2003.

Mr Liew is currently enrolled in the PCP for registered nurses (degree) at the National University of Singapore's Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, while Ophelia is doing a diploma in nursing at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

The Liew's passion for nursing was borne in part out of the family's own experience with dedicated nurses.

Ophelia told *The New Paper* that when she was diagnosed with childhood acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, a type of



Mr Joshua Liew and his daughter Ophelia.
PHOTO: NUS

cancer, at the age of five, the patience and care shown by the nurses who cared for her inspired her.

She recalled one nurse, whom she referred to as Nurse Cing, who would take time to distract and comfort her when she was afraid – especially whenever she had to face needles.

Mr Liew said that the period, which was trying for the family, was made easier by nurses who cared tirelessly, not just for his daughter, but for him as well.

He said: "After hours of being by her bed, when the nurses came by and asked if they could get me anything, with their cheery disposition, it made even me – as tired as I was – feel cheered up."

Mr Liew, who has another daughter, 14, added that the medical profession was some-

thing he had always been interested in.

He said: "At first, I was worried. It's a big change, especially financially. As a lecturer, I was earning a comfortable amount, and I was worried about how my family would feel about it."

"While we were concerned at first, they supported me and told me to go for it."

He said whenever the work gets difficult, he reminds himself that nurses fulfil an important role in caring for patients.

Mr Liew said: "I ask myself, if not us then who (will care for the patients)?"

Ophelia added: "I want to be able to give back to the nurses who helped me."

"When I went through chemo and lost all my hair, people at school would bully me, snatch my hat off and laugh at me. I became very self-conscious and afraid."

"The nurses gave me hope, and I want to be able to give hope to other patients."

Mr Liew added that now that they are studying the same field, it makes for additional bonding time.

He said: "We can study together, share notes, and she even corrects me sometimes."

Applications for the PCP for registered nurses (degree) September 2020 intake are open till the end of the month.

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Ms Juliet Choo and Mr Joshua Liew are classmates in the nursing professional conversion programme. TNP PHOTO: **KELVIN CHNG**

Caring for her father inspired PhD graduate to take on nursing

After 25 years in teaching and academia, Ms Juliet Choo, 47, is the first PhD graduate to take on one of the nursing professional conversion programmes (PCP), giving up her previous role as a lecturer teaching sociology and psychology programmes.

She is also at the National University of Singapore's Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies.

Ms Choo told *The New Paper* that while she had a few reasons for making the switch, the biggest was when her father had a serious accident and suffered from brain trauma in 2010.

VALUE

It was then that she realised the value and usefulness of nursing skills and knowledge, after caring for her father for three years.

She said after watching nurses care for her father and when she had the opportunity to interview nurses in the dementia ward for a research project, she felt moved by the dedication they displayed.

Ms Choo said: "Nurses are at the frontline of patient care and safety."

She added that should any-

thing happen, the reaction of the nurses on duty could be a matter of life or death for the patient.

She said: "You want to also make sure there is dignity there, especially for older patients, and to be able to bring them some comfort."

In honour of these professionals who devote their lives to looking after older people, caring for mothers and children, giving health advice, generally meeting everyday health needs and also in honour of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the World Health Assembly has designated 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife.

Ms Choo said having specialised in the arts and social sciences her whole life, wrapping her head around biology and scientific terms is a challenge – so are the many hours nurses are required to be on their feet.

But she said that being able to communicate with and bring comfort to patients, particularly the older ones, whom she has a soft spot for, makes the difficulties worthwhile.

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