

Duke-NUS grads take Hippocratic Oath in virtual ceremony

Formal graduation event postponed for new doctors who join medical force during pandemic

Calvin Yang

He was a naval officer for eight years and last held the position of officer commanding of a naval helicopter squadron.

But four years ago, Dr Lim Gim Hui made a career switch – after seeing what other people had to live through on volunteer humanitarian missions overseas – and

signed up for medical school.

“Realising how privileged I am as a Singaporean, I wanted to do all I can to give back to society,” he said.

On Friday, Dr Lim, 35, was one of 62 in the graduating cohort of Duke-NUS Medical School who marked their transition to becoming doctors by reciting the Hippocratic Oath in a 30-minute virtual ceremony. The oath-taking sets out the values and responsibilities physicians agree to

uphold for the care of their patients.

The coronavirus pandemic had pushed back plans for a formal graduation ceremony that was slated to be held yesterday. The school intends to hold a physical ceremony when it is feasible.

Its 10th graduating class will join the medical workforce next month, at a critical time as Singapore fights the coronavirus.

Professor Ian Curran, vice-dean of education at Duke-NUS, said: “Now, more than ever, our health-care and medical ecosystems need clinicians who are not only clinically competent, but also compas-



Dr Dave Ng was one of 62 graduates of Duke-NUS Medical School who marked their transition to becoming doctors by reciting the Hippocratic Oath in a virtual ceremony on Friday. PHOTO: COURTESY OF DAVE NG

two and six, said he will take the necessary precautions.

“Every day, I see many putting aside their fears and steadfastly carrying out their duties. I am humbled to be able to join the ranks of these people,” he said.

Fellow graduate Dave Ng said the oath-taking marks the start of another chapter. Before attending medical school, he worked for a few years after getting his chemical and biomolecular engineering degree in 2013.

The 31-year-old, who will start work as a house officer at Changi General Hospital next month, said he is not overly concerned about going to work during the pandemic and his training has taught him to adhere to the necessary precautions.

While he is a little disappointed that the graduation ceremony had to be postponed, Dr Ng said these are unprecedented times.

“Compared with final-year medical students in other parts of the world who had exams cancelled and graduated into the workforce prematurely, I think things are going pretty well for us, given that only the graduation ceremony is postponed,” he said.

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sionate and dedicated in their professional service to patients and their families.”

The school “made every effort” to ensure students could take the oath before starting work as doctors. The event was held on videoconferencing platform Zoom.

“We did not want students to miss out on this important and moving ceremony. It is a long-established rite of passage where medical graduates individually and collectively recite the oath, together with fellow senior clinicians,” said Prof Curran.

For Dr Lim, who starts a posting at National University Hospital, it is

a reminder to continue doing what he was trained for.

He recently completed his six-week posting at Sengkang General Hospital under a Student-In-Practice programme that allows final-year students to practise under the supervision of senior doctors. There, he examined patients and conducted daily ward rounds, among other tasks.

He said his time in the navy gave him the skills to establish rapport with his patients and work with others in a team.

While concerned about the virus, Dr Lim, who has two children aged