



(From right) Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing, Manpower Minister Josephine Teo and Senior Minister of State for Health Koh Poh Koon observing a class undergoing training at the National University of Singapore's Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies yesterday. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Healthcare sector will need more people in coming years

Efforts will be made to ease bottlenecks in training of healthcare workers, says Chan

Calvin Yang

Demand for manpower in the "recession-proof" healthcare sector will continue to grow in the coming years, said Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing.

This is due to changing demographics, such as an ageing population, and aspirations for better quality healthcare, he said at a virtual media conference yesterday.

Speaking after a visit to the National University of Singapore's Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, Mr Chan noted that efforts will be made to alleviate bottlenecks in the training of healthcare workers.

"We are committed to provide as many places as needed, so long as we can find people who have the desire, the passion and the qualities to join this sector," he added.

Singapore's healthcare sector is supported by a workforce of more than 100,000 people across both public and private sectors.

But in the future, an ageing population and rising chronic disease incidence will drive demand for manpower. New facilities, such as integrated facilities, general hospitals, community hospitals and polyclinics, will also be developed.

A three-pronged approach is being taken to help Singaporeans enter the healthcare sector and thrive in their careers.

One way is through preparing young Singaporeans for careers in healthcare. The Government has been working with institutes of higher learning to build a pipeline of professionals. For instance, local nursing intake rose from 1,500 in 2014 to 2,200 last year – an increase of about 50 per cent.

New undergraduate allied health programmes such as dietet-

ics and nutrition, and speech and language therapy, were introduced in recent years.

Another approach involves helping fresh graduates and mid-career job seekers without the relevant backgrounds to enter the sector.

Initiatives are in place to do so, such as career conversion programmes and training opportunities. This comes amid rising interest among workers to switch to the sector during the pandemic. For instance, there were three times more applications for the October intake of the professional conversion programme for registered nurses (diploma) than the intake back in April, said the Manpower Ministry.

The Government plans to create a 900-place training capacity over the next three years to cater to mid-career switchers entering nursing and allied health roles. But this may be adjusted depending on the interest and participation rate.

Mr Chan said the few years of foundation training needed for

some of the healthcare roles should not be seen as an obstacle but an investment, adding that many in the profession have stayed on and contributed for many years.

"This is a recession-proof profession because in good times and bad times, healthcare is important to all of us," he added.

Existing workers will also be given continuous training and development opportunities. These include training grants for professionals to take on skills attachment or formal postgraduate education.

Senior Minister of State for Health Koh Poh Koon, who was at the press conference, urged Singaporeans to consider a healthcare career.

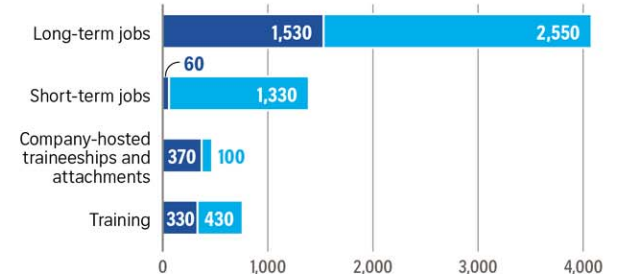
"Healthcare is a sector in which no two days are the same," he said. "Every patient brings different challenges. At the same time, it also brings the satisfaction of you having made a difference in the lives of a person or a family."

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Healthcare sector jobs situation report

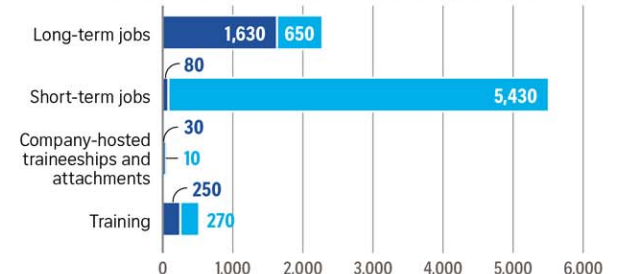
Healthcare professional and executive roles (dark blue) | Healthcare support and administrative support roles (light blue)

JOBS AND SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES



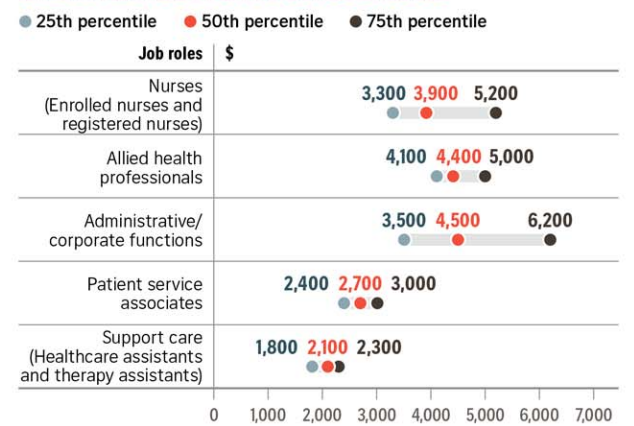
NOTE: Data is rounded to the nearest 10.

PLACEMENTS INTO HEALTHCARE OPPORTUNITIES



NOTE: Data is rounded to the nearest 10. About 4,100 individuals have been placed in jobs in healthcare-related Covid-19 operations, such as swabbers and swabbing assistants.

SALARY RANGES FOR MAJOR JOB ROLES



Source: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Jobs in the healthcare sector

STAFF NURSES

- Manage patients' care, assess their physical and mental wellness, and perform clinical procedures.
- Possess recognised nursing qualifications; must be registered or enrolled with the Singapore Nursing Board and have a valid practising certificate.

ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- Assess needs of clients and develop appropriate programmes to help them.
- Monitor and record clients' progress. Work with a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including

- doctors and social workers.
- Possess recognised allied health qualifications.

PATIENT SERVICE ASSOCIATES

- Register patients, schedule appointments and attend to inquiries.
- Assist doctors with patients' medical reviews in the consultation rooms.

HEALTHCARE ASSISTANTS

- Assist in carrying out various basic care activities for elderly patients, including bathing and feeding them.
- Passionate about working with the elderly.

Calvin Yang