



Ms Lee Zi Rong enjoyed studying biology in junior college, a subject which sparked her interest in nursing. PHOTO: MAX CHAN

Having A Soft Spot For Community Nursing

A stint at a nursing home showed aspiring community nurse Lee Zi Rong how the personal touch makes all the difference

BY CHEW HUI LING

Nurses have always played a critical role in healthcare, and their efforts have become even more recognised amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

With the constantly evolving healthcare crisis, nurses today have to be even more adaptable and think quickly on their feet.

Undergraduate Lee Zi Rong noticed this trend during a work attachment at the NTUC Health Nursing Home last December.

"Due to Covid-19, more safety protocols had to be put in place," says the 19-year-old. "I saw how adaptable and resilient the nurses were when dealing with the evolving regulatory changes. It made me realise that being a nurse involves lifelong learning, and there will always be room for growth as well as new ways to challenge oneself."

Ms Lee, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Science (Nursing) at the National University of Singapore (NUS), was selected to participate in the two-week community care clinical attachment as part of her academic curriculum.

Each day comes with a new challenge, she says, from learning how to carry out nursing procedures to understanding how to think critically about the rationale behind the care that is given. The

most challenging part is being mindful of patients' emotional needs while providing them with medical attention.

She recalls a patient with dementia who demanded to "leave work early" so she could take care of her sick mother. Ms Lee says a fellow nurse skilfully handled the situation by calming the patient down and assuring her that she would take her home after work.

"I realised that sometimes, just taking the time to show care and being creative with solutions can make a huge difference to their lives."

Seeing her colleagues' hard work, Ms Lee says she still has a lot to learn and is grateful for the learning opportunities provided at NTUC Health Nursing Home.

She says: "My first nursing attachment was a meaningful and fruitful one that gave me a glimpse into community nursing."

Discovering her dream career
The Hwa Chong Institution alumna enjoyed studying biology in junior college, a subject which sparked her interest in nursing.

While searching for scholarship opportunities, she chanced upon the Community Care Scholarship offered by MOH Holdings (MOHH). She attended an information session organised by the Agency of Integrated Care in partnership with MOHH to find out more about the career prospects.

However, with the onset of the pandemic last year, Ms Lee found it difficult to find suitable job-shadowing opportunities. She eventually landed a temporary position doing administrative

work at Singapore General Hospital. This allowed her to learn from doctors and nurses, gaining a deeper insight into her dream career.

Volunteer work

Following her stint at NTUC Health Nursing Home, Ms Lee now volunteers with Lion Befrienders, where she makes visits to seniors living in rental flats.

"I enjoy the time spent with the seniors as I listen to their stories and get to know them better. Through these conversations, I have realised the value of bringing healthcare services closer to the community so that seniors can receive the appropriate support to live and age well in their homes," she says.

As Singapore's population rapidly ages, Ms Lee believes that the community care sector will play an even more pivotal role in the healthcare system. She also hopes to be adequately prepared to better meet the needs of residents, especially in these tough times.

"As we have seen during the pandemic, Singapore is small and potentially vulnerable to external forces. Through my time on the scholarship programme, I hope to learn as much as I can in order to give back to Singapore, and maybe even the world, when the need arises."

■ Visit <https://www.healthcarescholarships.sg> for more information.

A FULFILLING JOURNEY IN COMMUNITY NURSING

Ms Lee Zi Rong has plenty of experience in the healthcare field despite being an undergraduate

• **NTUC Health Nursing Home**

As part of her National University of Singapore clinical attachment, Ms Lee spent two weeks shadowing different nurses to practise her nursing and communication skills.

• **Lion Befrienders**

Volunteering at the welfare organisation gave her the opportunity to interact with many seniors who have been living in low-income rental flats for decades.

• **Singapore General Hospital**

Ms Lee had a brief stint doing administrative work at the hospital, where she gained a better insight into the community care sector.

"I realised that sometimes, just taking the time to show care and being creative with solutions can make a huge difference to (patients') lives."

Ms Lee Zi Rong, Community Care Scholarship recipient