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 MUHLING

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

With the community evolving healthcare crisis, nurses now 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 21-year-old. She found herself providing care for patients who were used to getting around. “This was especially true when the nurses were dealing with the rapidly evolving regulatory changes. It made me realise that being a nurse means 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 programme 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 react critically to the minute behind the care that is given. The most challenging part is being mindful of patients’ emotional needs while providing them with medical attention.

In one instance, she took care of a patient with dementia who demanded “four work early” as she would take care of her sick mother. Ms Lee says a fellow nurse skillfully 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 (patients’) lives. This is one of the main reasons why I chose community care.”

Discovering her dream career

The Rivo Chang bursary recipient enjoyed studying biology and statistics, which sparked her interest in nursing.

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

However, with the onset of the pandemic, 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 future work.

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 mental wards.

“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 realized the value of bringing respite to the elderly. It is wonderful to see how the community cares for these seniors.”

Ms Lee says her first nursing attachment was a meaningful and fruitful one that gave her a glimpse into community nursing.”

As Singapore’s population ages rapidly, 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.

“I would love to see Singapore as a country where everyone has access to good healthcare. For me, this is a priority and the pandemic is small in comparison to the opportunities it has to offer.”

Visit https://www.healthcareяснursing.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 practice her nursing and communication skills.

• Lion Befrienders

Volunteering at the welfare organisation gave her the opportunity to interact with many seniors who have been left in low-income mental wards for decades.

• Singapore General Hospital

Ms Lee has a brief stint doing administrative work at the hospital, where she is currently part of the community care sector.

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Ms Lee Zi Rong, Community Care Scholarship recipient