

Siblings go from arts school to med school

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School Of The Arts (SOTA) graduates rarely look to medicine for higher studies but Krish Sheri bucked that trend in 2015 when he joined National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLL).

Now his sister Sonia, also a SOTA graduate, is following in his footsteps and, together, they have created history by becoming the first siblings from SOTA to pursue medicine.

"It's extremely competitive to get into medicine anywhere in the world," said Krish, 26, who has completed his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) and is currently doing his basic military training.

"My background as an arts student had its challenges. The advantage was that I went in with a fresh perspective. The disadvantage was that I had no senior or alumni with similar background to tap.

"I had to do a lot of reading, thinking and self-initiated projects to show my passion for medicine and humanity, and increase my chances of becoming a doctor."

The siblings, along with their elder brother Shiv, attended Pasir Ris Primary School. While Krish and Sonia joined SOTA thereafter, Shiv went to polytechnic and studied business. The 28-year-old is now a director at Ministry of Burgers.

All three immersed themselves in Indian arts because their parents Bhart Sheri, 57, a trading representative at UOBKayHian, and Preeti Sheri, 55, head of department (character and citizenship education) at a local school, wanted them to embrace their Indian heritage.

"When I was nine, I started learning the tabla at the Temple of Fine Arts. That was when I realised that I enjoy music," said Krish.

"When it came to choosing my secondary school, SOTA suited me well – it allowed me to pursue my passion for the arts and at the same time gave me an IB diploma that



Krish and Sonia (standing, left) with their parents Bhart and Preeti Sheri (seated) and brother Shiv. PHOTO: TMOYH DAVID

allowed me to apply to medical school. "Medicine has been a calling for me since the age of seven. I had that thought put into me that I wanted to become a doctor. It wasn't from parents or family members, it was just an instinct."

The five-year MMBS course was tough for Krish, who admitted he was an average student. But he completed it with dogged determination. Krish was a house officer for about a year at Singapore General Hospital after he graduated from YLL in 2020.

He will specialise in internal medicine with SingHealth when he completes his National Service in November next year.

He plans to further specialise in palliative medicine, which deals with end-of-life care. Sonia, who did theatre at SOTA, found her brother to be "definitely an inspiration".

"Even though we both believe that arts and medicine are not polar opposites, they are still seemingly on the

different ends of the spectrum," said the 19-year-old, who will have her first classes at YLL on Aug 8.

"And in knowing that he did it, I am assured that it's very much possible. I am definitely inspired to do the same and push through."

Sonia was exposed to medicine and caregiving from a very young age.

"I was taking care of my paternal grandmother when I was nine," she said.

"I would organise her medication and I used to research them. From there, I built on and became more interested in medicine and did even more research."

She thanks SOTA principal Mary Seah, vice-principal Ann Tan and acting head of student development Daniel Chua for paving the path to medical school for her.

"Very often, students say they built up their medical portfolio to apply for medicine. That's something I don't really agree with," said Sonia.

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Mr Bhart is ecstatic that his children have made it to medical school.

"I wanted to be a doctor but was poor in science, so I got into business," he said.

"I am very happy that my dream is being realised by my children."

Mr Bhart believes he and his wife gave their children "the best that we can".

"You can never prepare them in everything, but we just ensure that we give them our best time," he said.

"We encourage open discussions and we brought them up in a more mature way."

The couple do not pressure their children into doing anything against their will.

"We made it very clear that they could do whatever they wanted to do," said Mrs Preeti.

"We didn't chase them from class to class or school to school.

"We supported them with money and a network of family members and friends they could depend upon. We did not push anything and gave them the space to make mistakes and learn.

"But one thing we really insist on is good character, which they have in abundance."

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