

1 DAY TO NURSES' DAY!

Stuff you never knew!



In 1901, New Zealand became the first country to pass legislation, the Nurses Registration Act, on the registration of nurses. On January 10, 1902, Ellen Dougherty (left) became the first nurse to be registered.

Since 1990, the Singapore President has been opening the Istana to nurses on Nurses' Day to thank them for their contribution to the health and well-being of the nation.

Did you know that nurses from the Institute of Mental Health used to organise farming activities for patients as part of occupational therapy? Once the crops ripen, they would harvest the crops and prepare hearty meals for their patients.



Nurses on the clinical track manage patients' cases from admission to discharge, taking over some of the tasks traditionally performed by doctors.

Ever wondered why nurses wear upside-down watches pinned to their chest? It is so that they can check the time easily when their hands are full by looking down at the watches.



Write in
Pen your most heartfelt messages to nurses who have made a difference. Visit the Nurses blog at www.nurseblog.com.sg. Prizes will be awarded to the top three messages!

All in good time

When it comes to indulging in their favourite pastime despite hectic work schedules, these four nurses have got work-life balance down pat

Nurhidayah Rashid
Senior Staff Nurse
Yishun Polyclinic



She particularly loves taking close-

photography. Nurhidayah is a senior staff nurse at Yishun Polyclinic. She and her husband became interested in photography after being influenced by her brother, a freelance photographer, about a year ago. Since then, she has invested both her energy and money — she has spent more than \$6,000 on photography equipment — in her growing passion.

She particularly loves taking close-

ups of nature-related subjects such as flowers. Speaking about her love for macro photography, Nurhidayah was a picture of enthusiasm and excitement.

"I love magnifying small things, which people often ignore or take for granted. When you look at them through the camera, it's really very interesting," said Nurhidayah, who added that she is "mad about photographing flowers."

To date, she has taken over 3,000 shots of different types of flowers. Her next wish, she let on, is to compile a coffee table book using her photos for close friends and family.

Because she only has time to indulge in her hobby on her days off, or after tucking the kids into bed,

"If we're not healthy in mind and body, how can we manage our work properly?"



Nurhidayah appreciates her "me-time" even more.

"As nurses, we need to strike a good balance between work and personal life. Nursing can be a physically and emotionally demanding job. At work, we care for people. If we're not healthy in mind and body, how can we manage our work properly?" she said.

Even so, sometimes "24 hours is not enough" according to Nurhidayah, which is why time with her husband is precious. "Thankfully, we have the same hobby. So, we get to spend quality time with each other whenever we go for our photo shoots," she said.

Audrey Liew
Staff Nurse
National University Hospital



Liew, though. She sometimes jogs home after completing an eight-hour shift at NUH's Surgical Intensive Care Unit (SICU), where she monitors and cares for patients who have undergone major surgery.

Audrey lives in Jurong West — which is at least 10 km from her place of work at Lower Kent Ridge Road.

Running, said the sporty 25-year-old, comes naturally to her.

"I like to run," Audrey said. "Plus,

running home from work helps me to train and build up my endurance level."

Audrey got hooked on endurance races when she took part in her first 10km run three years ago. Since then, she has since progressed to more challenging marathons, duathlons and triathlons.

Later this year, she plans to par-



"Even though nursing can be a very busy career ... maintaining a healthy lifestyle is just as important."

ticipate in a 25km trail run. Unlike most marathons in which participants run on even ground, trail running takes place on uneven terrain. Runners may also be required to run on steep slopes.

To prepare for this event, Audrey let on that she has stepped up her training regime. Whenever she has free time after work, she runs up Mount Faber.

Despite her passion for distance running, Audrey said she has never let it affect her nursing work at the ICU ward. In fact, Audrey feels that as a nurse, it is even more important for her to keep fit and have a healthy lifestyle outside of work.

"I notice that a lot of people don't exercise regularly once they start work. Even though nursing can be a very busy career, looking after yourself well and maintaining a healthy lifestyle are just as important," she said.

Pauline Tan
Nurse Manager
Alexandra Hospital



>> Separated from his son when the 2004 tsunami struck, the man refused to believe that fate had taken away his child. For days, the man went from hospital to hospital, hoping to find him.

His determination paid off. Several weeks later, father and son were reunited.

This was one of the few heart-warming stories Pauline Tan, 37, a nurse manager at Alexandra Hospital, encountered on the various humanitarian relief trips she made over the years. But more often than not, most of her stories are heartrending.

"We were clearing the mud at the site where one of the houses had collapsed when we found the body of a baby. That is one of the saddest memories I have of doing relief work in Aceh in 2005," she said.

Helping out in Aceh gave Pauline her first taste of humanitarian relief work and it opened her eyes to the suffering of others. Last year, she went on another humanitarian relief trip — also organised by Alexandra



"In disaster areas, there is no such thing as segregation of tasks or position. My team members and I do the same work. We have one goal, and that is to help the suffering."

Hospital — to Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis swept across the country.

Pauline said that she had volunteered because she wanted to use her nursing skills to help others.

From tending to the wounded to educating villagers and sharing basic health care tips, Pauline and her fellow team mates worked tirelessly to help the affected get back on their feet.

"In disaster areas, there is no such thing as segregation of tasks or position. My team members and I do the same work. We have one goal, and that is to help the suffering," said Pauline, who currently oversees 38 junior nurses in a medical ward.

According to Pauline, her relief work experiences have changed her perception of life in many ways.

"Going to those areas really changed my way of thinking. Before going to all these places, I've never encountered people who lived in extreme poverty. I think the life we lead in Singapore is too comfortable and we take things for granted," she said.



Fong Poh Chee
Senior Nurse Manager
Changi General Hospital



>> Senior nurse manager Fong Poh Chee often jokingly advises the 28 nurses and two healthcare assistants she manages to prep their prospective husbands on the hectic nature of their work.

"I always tell the younger nurses that they have to 'train' their boyfriends to get used to their work hours, and to pick them up after work," said Poh Chee, laughing.

Currently based in Changi General Hospital, the 57-year-old mother of three has nearly three decades of experience in nursing. Over the years, Poh Chee has managed to maintain a healthy family life in spite of her busy work.

"It's not true that nurses don't have a life. It's about how you manage your time," she said.

Poh Chee also has her understanding mother and husband to thank. Her mother helped to look after her three daughters — now aged 18, 22 and 27 — while they were growing up, while her husband would ferry her from work so that she could cut down on travelling time.

Poh Chee also made it a point to give all her attention to her children after she knocked off from work. "Unless there is a very urgent matter to attend to, I try not to think about work at all when I am with my family," she said.

Having picnic dinners with her children at a park opposite their home was also a regular family-bonding affair.

Recalling their fun-filled dinner picnics, she said: "We used to live opposite a park. So, it was convenient for the kids and me to have dinner there in the evenings. The kids loved it and I took it as a form of relaxation after work."

Now that her children have all grown up, Poh Chee bonds with them in another way. "Now we watch movies or go shopping together!" she said.

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Debunking myths about nursing:

1 Nursing is a profession for women; it's not suitable for men. "Nursing has evolved and grown from strength to strength with the increased need for good and effective care. This demand cannot be completely filled by women. Besides, the range of opportunities to develop professionally has also improved, encouraging more men to join and make an impact in nursing and in healthcare."
Mr Poon Phak Hey, Senior Staff Nurse, Singapore National Eye Centre

2 Nursing is tiring and manually laborious.
It's shift work they say, but we never seem to be able to call it a day. Training, seminars and meetings, on our own time we stay. Two-hourly turning of patients, just a norm per se. But at the end of the day, we will still turn up for work somehow. Because I will always get a granny or two. Holding my hand, saying their very sweet thank you.
Poem by Ms Candice Leong, Senior Staff Nurse, Tan Tock Seng Hospital

3 Nurses come into frequent contact with people who are ill. I don't want to put my health at risk. "Many patients in hospital do not have contagious diseases. We have procedures in place to minimise the risk of anybody catching anything from those who are infected. In my specialty, Infection Control, my team and I help to make sure our workmates and their patients are protected."
Ms Ng Toon Mae, Senior Nurse Clinician (Infection Control), National University Hospital and Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, National University of Singapore

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