

3 DAYS TO NURSES' DAY!

Stuff you never knew!

Long ago, midwives used the scale that the *karung guni* man uses today to weigh babies. They did it by attaching a little net hammock to the scale.

The white nurses' hat, the universal symbol for nursing, was phased out in Singapore in the 1980s as more male nurses joined the profession.

Nurse clinicians can choose to specialise in specific areas of medicine, such as Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Orthopaedics and Paediatrics.

Although International Nurses' Day is celebrated worldwide on May 12, Singapore celebrates Nurses' Day on August 1 instead. This date marks the beginning of nursing in Singapore when a group of nuns began work at the General Hospital at the Sepoy Lines in 1885.



Florence Nightingale is recognised as an icon of nursing as she laid the foundation stone of professional nursing with the book, *Notes on Nursing*, published in 1860.

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!

Nursing a passion for the job

Three students spent an afternoon with nurses and got an in-depth look into the profession.



Chanel Lam who has completed her A-levels and will be starting the Bachelor of Science (Nursing) programme at National University of Singapore next month

speaks to

Kwek Puay Ee
Director of Nursing,
Tan Tock Seng Hospital

How does the management track differ from other career tracks in nursing?

Most nurses start off doing bedside nursing. As you move up the career ladder to become a senior staff nurse, you can choose to specialise in one of three nursing tracks — clinical, management or education — according to your strengths.

Nurses on the management track play a more administrative role. From managing staff welfare and development, ensuring high quality clinical standards to budget planning, nurse managers make sure that the day-to-day operations of their units runs smoothly.

If I want to go on the management track, what sort of qualifications would I need?

On top of a recognised general nursing qualification, you'll also need to have at least an advanced diploma or a relevant post-graduate qualification, and a degree in nursing to qualify for a supervisory role, depending on the healthcare institution you are based at.

Having the motivation to continuously upgrade your skills and knowledge is a crucial part of being a nurse. As a nurse manager, it is important that you have the relevant skills to lead your staff.

What sort of career advancement is available for nurses on this track?

Compared to 10 years ago, nurses now have the opportunity to take on expanded roles. Nurse managers can progress on to senior nurse manager positions. Later on, they may become an assistant director in nursing and, finally, the director of nursing.

You mentioned that nurse managers typically play an administrative role. Does this mean that they aren't involved in patient care?

Of course not! Even though nurse managers play a supervisory role, it is also their duty to ensure the best care for their patients, by making sure that there is enough manpower and maintaining staff morale.

The joy of seeing our patients who are on the road to recovery is often indescribable.

What are some challenges nurses on the management track face as they go about their work?

Besides the running of day-to-day operations in the unit, ensuring high-quality patient care is another challenge any nurse manager faces daily. To do that, they need to ensure a happy and cheer-

ful work environment for their staff. Having happy staff is very important in a hospital because we're dealing with patients. If the people who care for them are unhappy, patients will not be able to receive the best care.

How has your nursing profession change you as a person? Any regrets?

How can I have any regrets when nursing has given me all the opportunities in life?

Being a nurse has opened up my world. I've seen many caregivers who are very dedicated. Even though some of them faced many challenges, they still do their best to give the best care to their loved ones. It's really heartwarming to see such loving relationships. I've definitely grown a lot as a person.

"Being a nurse has opened up my world ... I've definitely grown a lot as a person."

Luo Yu Kai
2nd year student,
Anglo Chinese Junior College

speaks to

Nidu Maran s/o Balakrishnan
Advanced Practice Nurse,
Singapore General Hospital

Most people think nursing is a female-dominated profession. Why did you become a nurse?

I had dropped my pre-university studies halfway to pursue nursing. Everyone, including my principal, was shocked. I remember my principal asking me if I made the right choice.

I must admit that I tried very hard to adapt to a new learning environment during the first few years of my nursing studies. However, my clinical attachment made me realise that I had a flair for looking after people. And that ignited my passion for nursing.

It's true that nursing is a female-dominated profession. Although you see more male nurses now, we're still a rare breed.

But being in the minority group made me strive very hard and learn things fast, so that I could be on par with others.

What does an Advance Practice Nurse (APN) do, and how does the job scope differ from the work of other nurses?

As an APN, I'm equipped with the skills to see patients. If I'm unable to manage, then I will get a doctor to see what the problem is. Besides



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managing patients, there is also a significant amount of research to be done. My speciality is in the area of orthopaedics. So, a lot of my research is focused on that, as well as pain management. To date, I've completed over 10 research papers.

Isn't nursing about taking care of patients? How is research a part of the job?

As APNs, we're strongly encouraged to conduct research so as to positively influence patient outcomes.

For me, conducting research is a special interest and passion. From doing research, I am able to better manage my patients.

One of my studies, which includes managing post surgery pain, was presented at the Canadian Orthopaedic Nursing Conference. Some of my research

findings have also been put into practice in the hospital.

How has being a nurse changed your life?

I've learnt to appreciate life more. And having nursing skills is always a good thing — you never know when you'll need it and you'll always have a natural tendency to help others.

What keeps you going, especially when the going gets tough?

Nurses must love what they do, even if they're doing it every day. Passion is what drives me.

I make it a point to be on call even on my days off. My mobile phone is never turned off. That way, my patients can reach me should they encounter any problems.

Sometimes, my family and friends get annoyed when a patient calls me on my day off to ask for help. But I always tell them that if I don't provide the help and support to patients who could be in pain, then who will?

I could be having a bad day, but a simple and sincere "thank you" from a patient really brings joy to my life.

Muhammad Khairuddin Abdil Rahman and Nuratasha Nasir who have completed their A levels and will be starting the Bachelor of Science (Nursing) and Bachelor of Arts programmes, respectively, at National University of Singapore this year

speaks to

Catherine Teo
Advanced Practice Nurse,
National University Hospital

Nuratasha: What inspired you to join nursing?

It was simple: I wanted to help people. And nursing allows me to offer help to those who need it. During my college years, I had a very deep conviction that nursing was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Khairuddin: Why did you choose to go on the clinical track, when there are other nursing options?

I wanted to have direct contact with patients. As a nurse clinician, you manage and guide a small group of nurses. However, about 80 per cent of your time is spent giving direct care to the sick.

For about a decade, I was trained as an oncology nurse, looking after cancer patients. But several years ago, I decided to change my focus to palliative care, so that I could give better care to patients with life-threatening diseases, or those who are nearing the end of their lives.

Khairuddin: How were you prepared for the post of an APN?

To become an APN, you'll need at least a master's degree. You'll also have to go through a gruelling series of tests and an evaluation to qualify as an APN.

I pursued a Master of Science (Advance Practice Nursing: Palliative Care) at the University

of New York. It equipped me with the knowledge and confidence to be directly involved in planning the care of patients.

Before I was trained as an APN, I followed doctors' directions. Now, I have the opportunity to make a difference in managing patients — APNs can collaborate with physicians to diagnose certain conditions and recommend treatments.

Khairuddin: How exciting! What can I expect the career progression to be like for the clinical track?

You'll have to go through the first few foundation postings — from staff nurse to senior staff nurse — before you decide on your spe-

"Nursing isn't all about 'soft' skills or bedside care. You also need to be adequately skilled in technical knowledge so that you can make a difference in patient care. That's where education comes in."

cialisation. If you decide to go on the clinical track, you'll be groomed to become a nurse clinician.

You should never close your career options. Even if you've set your sights on the clinical track, you may realise later that you're better suited for other nursing tracks. Give yourself a few years to decide.

Nuratasha: What are some characteristics nurses on the clinical track should possess?

Nursing isn't all about "soft" skills or bedside care. You also need to be adequately skilled in technical knowledge so that you can make a difference in patient care. That's where education comes in.

Khairuddin: You've cared for so many patients. Doesn't your compassion ever run dry? Do nurses ever become desensitised after a while?

A number of junior nurses ask me this question, too. I always tell them that if I no longer feel sad when a patient I know passes away, I will leave the nursing profession, because that would mean that I am no longer passionate.



Debunking myths about nursing:

1 Nurses do all the dirty work — they only clean up after patients. "Contrary to popular belief, nursing is a highly-skilled profession. It requires analytical and observational skills as well as experience. The slightest mistake or oversight could lead to death. Nurses bear a heavy responsibility." **Ms Jasmine Sim Poh Eng, Staff Nurse, Alexandra Hospital.**

2 Anyone can become a nurse, since the job doesn't require much skill. "A nurse plays many roles — an educator, a counsellor, a caretaker, an advocate, a life-saver and sometimes a friendly shoulder to cry on. We constantly undergo training and education. What truly sets us apart from others is our love and tireless dedication to the care of those who are in need." **Ms Merianne Kokilam Selvaraj, Staff Nurse, National Skin Centre.**

3 Nurses are like doctors' handmaidens — they only take instructions from doctors. "Nurses do more than carry out doctors' orders but also provide emotional support for patients. They are involved in the treatment plan and provide suggestions to make treatment more suitable for patients." **Ms Yuan Qing Yun, Registered Nurse, Medical Intensive Care Unit, Changi General Hospital.**

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