

2 DAYS TO NURSES' DAY!

Stuff you never knew!

In Singapore, nurses are sometimes addressed as "Sisters." This term of endearment and respect has its origins in olden days when the country's first nurses were nuns from a local-based French convent.



Did you know that KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH, above) provides local and international retrieval and transport services for babies and children who require critical care? Since 2002, the Children's Hospital Emergency Transport Services (CHETS) has moved more than 400 patients, by land, air and sea, to and from KKH, as well as other institutions in Singapore.

Nursing is not only about bedside care. Nurse managers can also be involved in contributing to national healthcare policies.

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!

On the right track

CLINICAL TRACK

Audrey Wong, 31
Advanced Practice Nurse
Institute of Mental Health

9 years in nursing



"Working at the frontline requires me to think on my feet. Despite the challenges, I'm always rewarded when I see patients getting better under my care."

2000: Staff Nurse (SN)
I started out as an SN at IMH (picture, right), where I worked on various psychiatric disciplines, taking care of male and female patients with mental health issues. My most memorable experience was when I was based in a psycho-geriatric ward where many of the elderly patients have dementia. Caring for them and bringing them back to reality makes my job not only interesting but enduring too.

Qualification:
• Diploma in Nursing, after her O levels

CLINICAL TRACK

Hajjah Nor Aini Hashim, 50
Principal Assistant Nurse
Alexandra Hospital

27 years in nursing



"As a Principal Assistant Nurse, I'm given the opportunity to coach and groom junior nurses. It's very rewarding for me to see them grow to become good nurses."



1982: Assistant Nurse (AN)

My first posting was as an AN at Woodbridge Hospital — now known as the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). Two years later, I was transferred to Tan Tock Seng Hospital where I widened my nursing experience, looking after patients with neurological conditions, stroke and chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. In 1988, I was posted to the Communicable Disease Centre where I had HIV patients as young as 19 years old under my care.

Qualification:
• Certificate in Assistant Nurse Training, after her O levels

EDUCATION TRACK

Farzeedah Ibrahim, 34
Nurse Educator
Singapore General Hospital

13 years in nursing



"Knowledge is very important. As nurses, we need to constantly upgrade and educate ourselves so that we can provide the best care for our patients."

1996: Staff Nurse (SN)
After graduating from Nanyang Polytechnic with a nursing diploma, my first post was an SN at a general medical ward at the Singapore General Hospital. Two years later, I was posted to a neurology ward.

Qualification:
Diploma in Nursing, after her O levels

MANAGEMENT TRACK

Joann Pang, 37
Assistant Director of Nursing
Operating Theatre
National University Hospital

18 years in nursing



"Every day, when I go to work, I know that I can make a difference in the lives of many people, be it my staff or patients."

1991: Staff Nurse (SN)
As staff nurse, I looked after cancer patients in an oncology ward in the National University Hospital (NUH). Two years later, I was attached to a major operating theatre. I pursued an Advanced Diploma in Nursing at Nanyang Polytechnic in 1997.

Qualification:
• General Certificate in Nursing, after her A levels



1998: Senior Staff Nurse (SSN)
I continued to serve in the major operating theatre as an SSN. In addition to my clinical duties, I also supervise a team of staff nurses.

Qualification:
• Advanced Diploma in Nursing

2001: Nurse Clinician
I was a Nurse Clinician in NUH's Operating Theatre, serving mainly obstetric and gynaecology patients. I was mostly involved in clinical work, and the supervision of new nurses.

Qualification:
• Bachelor of Nursing (Health Science)



2005: Senior Clinical Instructor (SCI)
I've always enjoyed imparting skills and knowledge to new nurses. That's why I embarked on the education track. As an SCI, I plan and provide clinical teaching to nursing students and trainees. The clinical experiences I gained from my SN and SSN days have made me a better instructor.

Qualification:
• Advanced Diploma in Nursing
• Bachelor of Nursing

2003: Nurse Manager
Although the clinical track was the obvious route for me, I decided to give the management track a try, to see which track suited me better. As a nurse manager, I was involved in human resource and administrative work. Even though I enjoyed doing clinical work, I discovered that the management track suited me better.

2006: Senior Nurse Manager (SNM)
My role as an SNM was similar to that as a Nurse Manager, except that I had added responsibilities. Then I managed the day-to-day operations and the nurses at NUH's major operating theatre, and emergency operating theatre.



2008: Assistant Director of Nursing
My current responsibilities include supervision, organisation, hiring and evaluation of staff. I also plan and direct clinical and service delivery, as well as participate in various hospital committees. In the management role, I

have to take the reins each day as the leader, advocating necessary changes for the benefit of the nurses and health care system.

Nurses are groomed as clinicians, managers and educators



2005: Senior Staff Nurse (SNN)

When I took on the role of an SNN, my responsibility was expanded to teach and provide clinical supervision to my junior staff. This allowed me to work with other nurses to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice when it comes to delivering effective care to patients.

2008: Advanced Practice Nurse

I am currently an APN intern providing advanced clinical care to patients in the ward, the outpatient clinics and emergency department. The introduction of this role has brought nursing at IMH to greater heights, as we moved from the traditional model of care to a more relevant and sophisticated one.

Qualification:
• Advanced Diploma in Nursing (Mental Health)
• Bachelor of Science (Nursing)
• Master of Nursing (Mental Healthcare)

2009 Jan: Principal Assistant Nurse (PAN)

Having acquired the Advanced Certificate in Nursing For Enrolled Nurses at NHG College, I am now able to take on a broader job scope as a PAN. Currently, I have 22 junior nurses under my care. I really enjoy training and imparting knowledge to these junior nurses.

Qualification:
• Advanced Certificate in Nursing for Enrolled Nurse

2009 July: Nurse Educator (NE)

My role as an NE is to develop high quality curriculum and training programmes for nurses. NEs also conduct programmes for the public. For instance, we sometimes conduct nursing career talks and health education programmes in schools.

Qualification:
• Master of Training and Development

I couldn't have done it without my mentor's guidance

TANTOCK SENG HOSPITAL
Mentor: Lily Ng, Nurse Clinician (in blue)
Mentee: Christina Wong, Staff Nurse

Like many new nurses, Christina Wong was in a constant state of "fear" during the initial weeks of her career. Having given up a job in hospitality, Christina — who is in her 30s — said her mid-career switch meant that she had to adjust to a new lifestyle. What was even more daunting was being attached to an intensive care unit — any miscalculation could be fatal.

Thankfully, her mentor, 36-year-old Lily Ng — a senior staff nurse then — was with her "every step of the way" for the first six months. Through Lily's guidance, Christina familiarised herself with the ICU's operations and routine. She also learnt to monitor patients' vital signs, and how to deal with distraught relatives professionally.

Besides technical skills, Christina also picked



up something more intangible from Lily — her passion for nursing. "As a nurse, Lily was a picture of dedication and positivity. The work in an ICU can be very fast-paced and draining. Despite the challenges, Lily's guidance and passion really inspired me to continue," said Christina.

KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
Mentor: Lim Pei Kwee, Nurse Clinician (in blue)
Mentee: Angela Hui, Senior Staff Nurse

Having once been a newbie herself, Lim Pei Kwee understands the challenges that novice nurses face. A nurse clinician at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, the 49-year-old specialises in paediatric diabetes and is currently mentoring Angela Hui, a senior staff nurse, in that area.

According to Pei Kwee, a good mentor is someone who is enthusiastic about her work, and is willing to share her skills and knowledge. Being able to provide constructive feedback and support is also part of a mentor's job.

As a paediatric diabetes resource nurse, part of Angela's work includes educating the child and his or her caregivers about insulin administration and how to maintain a stable level of blood glucose.

Angela, who is in her 30s, recalled how she

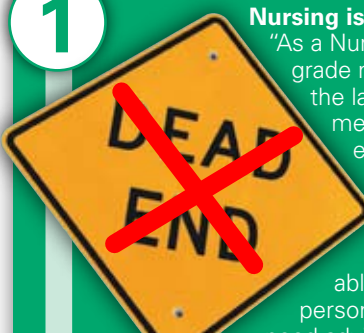


used to be affected whenever she saw parents cry upon learning that their children had diabetes.

"Pei Kwee taught me that it was natural for the family to be sad and to let them grieve," said Angela. "Thanks to my mentor, I'm more confident and professional in managing tearful parents."

Debunking myths about nursing:

1



Nursing is a dead end job.

"As a Nurse Clinician, I get to upgrade my skills and learn about the latest medical developments through continuing education. This allows me to provide better consultation services in the wards and outpatient clinics. I am also able to act as the resource person for colleagues who need advice on patient care."

Ms Teo Lee Wah, Nurse Clinician, National Heart Centre Singapore

2

You have to start young, if you want to become a nurse.

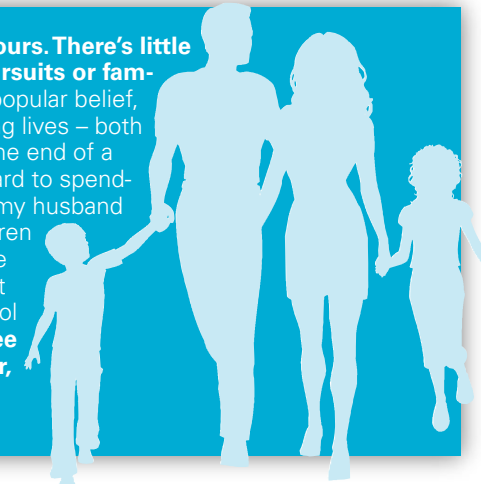
"I was a teacher before I switched to nursing in my late 20s. My supervisors gave me many training opportunities, and recently, I was certified a midwife. My skills are enhanced and my job is more fulfilling than ever. In future, I hope to combine my passion for teaching and nursing, to help nurture future nurses."

Ms Shefaly Shorey, Staff Nurse, National University Hospital

3

Nurses work long hours. There's little time for personal pursuits or family life.

"Contrary to popular belief, nurses do lead fulfilling lives — both at work and play. At the end of a work day, I look forward to spending quality time with my husband and three young children through meals, leisure activities and frequent vacations during school holidays. Ms Poh Chee Lien, Nurse Educator, Institute of Mental Health



A change that made the difference

PROFESSIONALS CONVERSION PROGRAMME FOR REGISTERED NURSES

LEEYING LING, 35

Lee Ying Ling's decision to give up a well-paying sales job in the pharmaceutical industry to "do something more meaningful" took a few people by surprise.

The turning point for the 35-year-old came when a close friend died in a plane crash. That event changed her perspective on life. In 2000, she decided to do fundraising for charities, but became "stagnant" after several years.

"I wanted a job where I could help other people. In 2007, I saw the Professionals Conversion Programme for Registered Nurses advertisement, and it struck a

chord," said Ying Ling, who has a bachelor's degree in marketing and a master's degree in business.

The programme helps Singaporeans who want to make career switches acquire the relevant training to become registered nurses. Successful candidates will be sponsored by a local healthcare institution to pursue the three-year Diploma in Nursing at Nanyang Polytechnic, while receiving a training allowance. A-level graduates and diploma and degree holders with prior working experiences can complete the Diploma in Nursing in just two years.

Through the programme, Ying Ling



is brushing up on her knowledge of topics such as physiology and the human anatomy. She also spends about six hours each week, doing hands-on work in the polytechnic's nursing lab, which is designed to look like a hospital ward.

Of her switch, Ying Ling said: "I had difficulties adapting in the first month of my studies. By the second month, I told my husband I had learnt so many interesting things," she said.

When Ying Ling graduates in April next year, she will be attached to Tan Tock Seng Hospital — her sponsoring healthcare institution — as a professional nurse.

PLACE-AND-TRAIN PROGRAMME FOR ENROLLED NURSES

FARIDAH BEGUM, 32

Faridah Begum was a uniformed personnel in the Singapore Police Force for almost a decade. Instead of furthering the career she had painstakingly carved out for herself over the years, she decided to switch to nursing.

"It was a calling. I wanted to be of service to people who are ill, and be directly involved in alleviating their pain and misery," said the 32-year-old, who is on WDA's Place-and-Train Programme for Enrolled Nurses.

The programme, which is sponsored



by WDA and hospitals, prepares students to be enrolled nurses who are qualified to offer direct nursing care, assist with medical procedures and monitor patients' progress.

Faridah is currently studying for the 18-month NITEC in Nursing at ITE College East on a full-time basis. She will join SGH as an enrolled nurse when she graduates in October.

Even though it took Faridah "lots of guts and courage" to give up her former job, her mid-career switch did not come as a surprise to her friends and family.

She was a member of the St John Ambulance Brigade during her secondary school days.

Her best friend, who is a nurse clinician, had also encouraged her to pursue her passion for nursing.

Faridah said being a mid-career nursing student has motivated her to be her best in school.

"Age is certainly no barrier, when it comes to picking up new skills. Now that I've decided on this new career path, there's no such thing as backing out or switching off," she said.

CHENG SIAH CHOON, 44

Making the switch from the construction industry to nursing has given Cheng Siah Choon a more "intangible" form of happiness.

Siah Choon, who was based in the construction industry and was retrenched three times, said: "I made the switch into the healthcare industry because I felt it was a stable job. It also gave me the opportunity to help people around me."

In 2006, he joined the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) as a healthcare assistant, where he did mostly routine bedside care such as assisting patients during meal

times and ensuring that they take their medication.

Last year, he signed up for the Place-and-Train Programme for Enrolled Nurses to study for the NITEC in Nursing at ITE College East.

Besides supporting mid-career Singaporeans to become enrolled nurses, the programme also allows existing healthcare assistants such as Siah Choon to upgrade their skills, with recommendation by their existing employers.

"By upgrading my skills, I will be able to assist in procedures, such as tube feeding, and monitor the patients' progress. I

believe I can better help patients in their recovery when I return to IMH as an enrolled nurse in October," said Siah Choon, who will be graduating in less than three months' time.

Citing himself as an example, Siah Choon urged those who are contemplating a mid-career switch to nursing to "take up the challenge".

"I'm very lucky to have the support of my family, fellow colleagues and bosses at IMH, and the WDA. If you're willing to move out of your comfort zone, there are actually many opportunities for you," he said.



TYPES OF NURSES	CONVERSION PROGRAMME	TRAINING PROVIDER	TRAINING DURATION	NEXT INTAKE	FIND OUT MORE
ENROLLED NURSES	Nitec in Nursing (Accelerated)	Institute of Technical Education	18 months	April 2010	Career previews will commence in Oct 2009. Visit this website for updates nearer the date: www.wda.gov.sg
REGISTERED NURSES	Diploma in Nursing (Accelerated)	Nanyang Polytechnic	2 years	April 2010 (application opens in Nov 2009)	Visit this website in Aug 2009: www.parkwaycollege.edu.sg
	Diploma in Nursing	Parkway College	3 years	April 2010 (application opens in Sept 2009)	

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