In the right track

Nurses are groomed as clinicians, managers, and educators

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

Debunking myths about nursing:

1. Nursing is a dead end job.
   - Fact: “Nursing is a great career choice. It allows you to use skills and learn about the human body, helping others who are vulnerable. You can be very ‘first’ and ‘last’ as a nurse. Despite the challenges, it’s a fulfilling and rewarding profession,” said Christina.

2. You have to start young, if you want to be a nurse.
   - Fact: “I was a teacher before I switched to nursing in my late 20's. My supervisors gave me the opportunity to try. Now, I have a job that I love.”

3. Nurses work long hours. There’s little personal time for nurses.
   - Fact: “Nursing is a demanding job, but it’s a rewarding one. I enjoy the challenges and the personal interactions. I also have time for personal pursuits.”

In Singapore, nurses are sometimes addressed as “nurses.” This term can be an endearment and respect, as it’s a tradition for nurses to respond to nurses from local-based French sources.
A change that made the difference

PROFESSIONALS CONVERSION PROGRAMME FOR REGISTERED NURSES

LEE YING 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 fund-raising 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

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.

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