

PROFESSIONALS IN HEALTHCARE

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Answering call of duty

A career switch takes Muhammad Faiz from the military base to hospital corridors

BY RATNA RAMLI

With Mr Muhammad Faiz's warm smiles and friendly demeanour, many would not have thought that he was once a stern-faced captain in the Singapore Army.

The senior staff nurse from Woodlands Health Campus (WHC) made the career switch almost three years ago after serving in the force for eight years. Instead of managing a group of military men, the 32-year-old now supervises WHC's pre-operation wards, helps with quality improvement and patient safety at the hospital and mentors junior nurses.

WHC broke ground in April 2017 as the first integrated health campus in Woodlands.

Given Mr Faiz's qualification and experience in nursing, the career switch was not too drastic for him. The Army had sponsored his three-year nursing degree and he was subsequently posted as an infantry officer. It was during his stint as an infantry officer that he realised even if he was not sent on overseas



PHOTO: TED CHEN

military missions, he could still contribute to the country and society by putting his nursing skills to good use in the healthcare sector.

It was a difficult decision to leave a career he had enjoyed and mentors who had helped him but his parents and wife gave him their support and blessings, which helped him with the transition.

While the two careers may seem worlds apart, Mr Faiz explains that the training he has received in both is applicable in either field. To him, serving in the Army and nursing requires adhering to a high level of strict protocols and guidelines. When it comes to dealing with people, both jobs require one to be patient and compassionate, as well as be able to build good rapport with others.

When asked if he felt he should have joined nursing earlier, he said: "I think my time in the force has prepared me to be a better nurse – more resilient, adaptable and disciplined. I am also older than an entry-level nurse and I think that maturity makes me more relatable to our older patients."

To Mr Faiz, nursing has given him the priceless privilege of being part of his patients' journeys – helping and being there for them during their most trying times. While he is working to further hone his management and clinical skills, he also looks forward to welcoming new nurses and showing them the ropes at WHC.

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Touching lives, moving hearts

Nursing has taught Oei Shu Xian to count her blessings and cherish her loved ones

BY RATNA RAMLI

Her passion for nursing was ignited when she was part of St John's Ambulance Brigade in secondary school and was posted to a local hospital for attachment. The working experience taught Ms Oei Shu Xian the fragility of life and inspired her to make a positive contribution to someone's life.

She is also motivated by her brother who is a doctor. She decided to pursue nursing as a full-time career at 22 after getting her degree in nursing. She was among the first batches of graduates from National University of Singapore's Bachelor of Science (Nursing) – a three year programme that has helped equipped her with the relevant skills and trained her to cope with the stress that comes with the job.

The 32-year-old is now a staff nurse at Woodlands Health Campus (WHC).

"Nursing taught me a lot of things that you can't learn in books. I gained new perspectives in life and learnt to not take things or my loved ones for granted. Even being able to wake up everyday is a blessing itself," she says.

She chats with her patients, mostly elderly, to get to know them better and notes down their preferences such as how they would like to be addressed or how they would like to have their coffee in the morning. She believes in spreading positive energy to help make her patients' stay comfortable and pleasant.

The cheerful lady recounted how she used to find it hard to control her emotions when she first started working as a nurse 10 years ago. The passing of patients whom she cared for affected her emotionally. Today, she is still saddened by death, but finds solace by telling herself that her patients' suffering has ended and that she has done her best to help them during their stay at the community hospital.

While the responsibility of caring for someone else may seem overwhelming at first, Ms Oei advised fellow nurses and aspiring students to always keep an open mind as nursing is a rewarding career.

"It's not going to be easy but it's going to be worth it. The feeling of being able to touch someone's life and make a difference is something you will never forget," she added.