Child with heart issue grows up wanting to take care of others

She is among 108 aspiring healthcare workers who received scholarships

Natalie Tan

When she was 15, Ms Sarah Amyna Nor Azmi had a permanent implant placed to keep her heart beating in the right pace.

The teenager was diagnosed with pre-excitation syndrome, a rare cardiac condition where the heart beats out of sync with the rest of the body, at the age of six months.

Despite undergoing multiple operations, her heart rate did not return to normal range, and she had to rely on a pacemaker.

And yet, the amount of time in hospitals when she was a child had not dampened her resolve to enter the world of healthcare that sparked her interest in joining the industry as a provider of such care, rather than as a patient.

On July 30, the 20-year-old received the Republic’s first batch of Health Ministry Healthcare Scholarship Award ceremony from the state of Honors, Health Ministry Ong Ye Kung.

Ms Sarah was one of 100 recipients of the healthcare scholarship, awarded to aspiring public healthcare professionals in medicine, science and healthcare disciplines by the Public Health Medical Association.

“This is done from the Scholarships awarded in 2013. Ms Sarah is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science (Nursing) at the National University of Singapore’s (NUS) Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, and due to her entering her third year in August.

She was raising a profession that allows her the main hands-on interaction with patients, support- ing doctors and nurses, but the journey is not without its challenges.

“Nurses are the middlemen between the doctor and the patient. They are the ones who engage directly with patients, and so it’s important to have nurses who are skilled, professional, and demonstrative of their empathy,”

But more than anything, she hopes that people with disabilities be treated as equals and not as a burden on society, she added.

“I believe at the end of the day, it’s also very important to look at people, and for them to know what they can contribute to society despite their challenges,”

Ms Sarah said the scholarship program will broaden her perspective of the healthcare sector at the 2018 National University Health City Convention Centre that they are entering the healthcare sector at an exciting time of change, when Singapore is facing one of its biggest social transformations - a rapidly ageing population.

“The only thing is becoming more and more aged, but healthcare technology is also advancing rapidly - with precision medicine enabling doctors to intervene in the cellular level earlier,”

Ms Sarah said that the healthcare sector was poised to meet the needs of tomorrow.

“There are powerful forces, driving us to transform our healthcare system to leverage the tools of the future to meet the needs of tomorrow’s healthcare,” she added, pointing to nascent initiatives like the Healthcare 5G and Ageing Research Innovation and Translation initiative for prevention care, improving the life span of people.

Ms Sarah said that there are obvious opportunities for the scholarship recipients to work in multidisciplinary care teams across different settings, from hospital to polyclinic to community care.

She said the next generation of healthcare professionals is well-equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century, and is poised to take on the responsibilities of the healthcare sector in the face of rising demands.

She also expressed her gratitude to her grandparents who raised and educated her.

Ms Sarah’s family moved to Singapore when she was nine. She grew up in secondary school, when she learnt the career to her grandparents who were diagnosed with cancer.

She then, this family has become quite interested in healthcare.

Ms Sarah developed an interest in medicine when she became a carer to her grandmother who was diagnosed with cancer.

Mrs Chew, who studied in a Master of Science in a Master of Science in a medical sciences program, did not have a family healthcare professional.

She enquired every time she visited his grandmother in hospital, but the doctors enquired about her treatment and care.

“Don’t know how he [the doctor] feels, but the doctors are the people who will always focus on what the patient needs. It’s also very important to look at people and for them to know what they can contribute to society despite their challenges,”

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