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100 nurses honoured for their exceptional performance

Recipients of MOH award also recognised for contributions to raising the nursing profession

Cheryl Tan

Nurse Antoinette Goh wants her patients to stay out of hospital.

Beyond providing medical care and support to patients while they are in hospital, she sees the role of nurses as helping them "continue to stay healthy after their discharge to reduce the possibility of readmission", said the assistant nurse clinician at the National University Health System's Regional Health Office.

As part of her job scope, she helps recovering patients transition from the hospital to their home environment, taking into account their medical and social needs.

For instance, she conducts home visits to ensure that the patients' living environments are safe, and that they have the necessary support from their family members.

The patients she works with are often elderly, with complex medical conditions or several illnesses at the same time.

"I believe in empowering people by helping them take ownership of their medical conditions," said Ms Goh, 31.

This entails identifying their needs, helping them to understand their medical conditions and to take active steps towards their well-being, such as watching their diets.

Outside of work, she volunteers at nursing homes and hospices, and is a regular on humanitarian trips to Cambodia, where she helps to set

up mobile medical clinics and teaches first aid to the communities there.

Ms Goh was one of 100 nurses presented with the yearly Nurses' Merit Award by the Ministry of Health (MOH) yesterday.

The award is given to nurses who have "displayed noteworthy and exceptional performance, participated in professional development, and contributed to raising the nursing profession", said MOH.

They come from a variety of care settings, spanning the community care sector, private hospitals and public healthcare institutions.

Each award comes with a medal, to be worn as part of the nurse's uniform, and a cash prize of \$1,000.

The nursing workforce has grown over the years to number 42,000 today, and its role has expanded to encompass community nursing, education, research and technology, so as to improve the quality of care for patients and their resulting health and quality of life.

Mr Koh Chee Meng, an assistant nurse clinician at the Institute of Mental Health, was also among those honoured yesterday.

He was part of a team that piloted the institution's Recovery Oriented Transition Care Model in April last year. Under this programme, he conducts weekly home visits to follow up with discharged patients from his ward to ensure that they are coping well.

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Nurse Antoinette Goh conducting a check-up in the home of a recovering patient. Beyond providing medical care and support to patients while they are in hospital, she sees the role of nurses as helping them "continue to stay healthy after their discharge to reduce the possibility of readmission". Both Ms Goh and Mr Koh Chee Meng (right) were among 100 nurses presented with the Nurses' Merit Award yesterday. PHOTOS: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM, INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

left alone, and for them to remember that we still care for them even when they are no longer in the hospital with us," he said.

He added that building rapport with the patients has made it easier for them to share the problems and worries that they struggle with.

The 60-year-old, who has been in nursing for 36 years, said he is a firm believer in lifelong learning.

He completed his nursing degree in May, and holds a diploma in nursing from Nanyang Polytechnic, as well as an advanced diploma in nursing for mental health.

The degree course helped him learn how to better communicate with his patients and understand their needs, which has helped him to guide and support them along their road to recovery, said Mr Koh,

who leads a team of nurses at IMH.

To support the professional growth of nurses in community care, MOH launched a Community Nursing Competency Framework in January, which defines the scope of work, roles and competencies of nurses at various stages of their career.

Besides providing greater clarity on their roles as community nurses, it aims to ensure that training and

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IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW UP

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development can be better structured and organised.

Nurses who are keen to develop further clinical skills and knowledge in specific areas will be able to sign up for courses at the new National Nursing Academy website, which was launched in March to promote lifelong learning for nurses.

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