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Presidential honours for 5 nurses

They bag the President's Award for Nurses this year – the highest accolade in Singapore for the nursing profession.



Ms Patricia Yong (centre), deputy director of nursing at Singapore General Hospital, conducting a refresher course for nurses on Monday. Six years ago, Ms Yong started cross-training intensive care unit nurses in the hospital. PHOTO: SGH



Ms Tay Yee Kian (left), assistant director of nursing at NUHS Regional Health System Office, seen here with her colleague Yeo Ai Wah, led her team to supervise the set-up for Covid-19 swab testing at 15 nursing homes. PHOTO: NUHS

Patricia Yong Approach to ICU preparation bears fruit amid Covid-19

Amrita Kaur

Six years ago, Ms Patricia Yong started cross-training intensive care unit (ICU) nurses in Singapore General Hospital (SGH). She would rotate them every three months from the intermediate care area and high dependency units to ICUs, and from one ICU to another. "I wanted the nurses to be exposed to a higher level of sophisticated care for patients so that when required, we have enough high-skilled nurses to work in such wards," said the 56-year-old deputy director of nursing at SGH. The soundness of this approach has now been proven amid the Covid-19 outbreak, as competent

ICU nurses could be deployed across ICUs as needed. Ms Yong started as a registered nurse at SGH 35 years ago and later specialised as an ICU nurse. She said she was "happy and humbled" to receive the President's Award for Nurses. "The award is dedicated to the ICU team who work hard every day. I'm thankful that they have also been recipients of my ideas and suggestions." As the co-chair of the SGH Campus ICU Committee, Ms Yong is in charge of ICU expansion, while maintaining the quality and safety of intensive care. She also oversees a team of ICU nurses caring for Covid-19 patients in the ICU, and is the disease outbreak nursing lead for SGH. She was involved in operations and planning for Covid-19 response, including manpower and workflow planning for the ICU and emergency department. Drawing on her experience with the severe acute respiratory syndrome patients in 2003, she emphasises vigilance in upholding a high level of infection prevention practices. "Nursing is not an easy task and perseverance is very important. Apart from being competent in clinical skills, nurses should also have a high level of emotional quotient and be compassionate. They must be observant and good listeners because if they're in-patient, they may miss out on symptoms in a patient." Ms Yong does not want to rest on her laurels. She has been appointed as nursing lead of the upcoming Elective Care Centre in the SGH Campus, a dedicated facility for scheduled operations. "It is a big responsibility but I look forward to taking on the role," she said.

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Tay Yee Kian Passion for training and mentoring young colleagues

Realising that elderly residents at nursing homes were particularly vulnerable to Covid-19, Ms Tay Yee Kian stepped up to train community nurses to better care for them. The assistant director of nursing at the National University Health System (NUHS) Regional Health System Office led her team to supervise the operational set-up for swab testing at 15 nursing homes in the west of Singapore. She also coached 89 nurses across the homes in infection control measures, such as donning and doffing personal protective equipment, and nasopharyngeal swab testing. "Some nurses, who were initially very apprehensive, were very appreciative that we were there to provide them with the necessary

guidance and support. Some of the nurses even told me proudly that they have trained more of their nursing colleagues to support the testing," said Ms Tay, 55. She also led a team of community nurses in screening and swabbing foreign workers at the dormitories. Ms Tay, who became a nurse at National University Hospital in 1989, said training and mentoring young nurses has always been her passion. "I believe the knowledge I have gained from many seniors before me should be passed on, so that many more can benefit from their wisdom as I have. I hope they can pass this knowledge on to their juniors as well, so in this way our profession can become stronger," she added. Armed with 25 years of in-pa-

tient nursing experience, she joined the NUHS Regional Health System Office in 2014 to set up a community nursing unit. As a community nurse, she worked with patients in their homes. "Our community team does not have equipment or resources such as those available in the hospital. This requires us to be innovative, adaptable and clinically adept, so that we can continue to provide care to our patients," said Ms Tay, who now leads a team of over 50 nurses and allied health professionals to develop community nursing in the western part of Singapore. Ms Tay said that she feels blessed and honoured to receive the President's Award for Nurses. "This award speaks for the growing significance of community nursing in Singapore – increasingly, care is being provided in the community and in homes of patients, as we adopt a patient-centric perspective and bring care to patients."

Amrita Kaur



Ms Kala Narayanasamy, Woodlands Health Campus' deputy director of nursing, returned to nursing after retiring in 2010. PHOTO: WOODLANDS HEALTH CAMPUS

Kala Narayanasamy Her mantra: Make things safer, faster and better for patients

Cheryl Tan

Ms Kala Narayanasamy's mantra in nursing is to ask herself how she can make things "safer, faster and better" for her patients. Now the deputy director of nursing at Woodlands Health Campus, Ms Kala had retired in 2010 but soon returned to the profession she joined in 1982. "We come from a generation where we often stay in the same job throughout the years and, as a result, we grow roots in our career," said the 59-year-old. A year after retirement, in 2011, a former colleague asked her to lead the nursing team at Kien Ci Nursing Home. Ms Kala agreed, and while there she took part in a project to improve oral hygiene among the home's elderly patients. In 2012, Ms Kala landed herself the role of nurse educator at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, where she groomed and mentored younger nurses, hoping to shape them into future leaders in nursing. "I always told my nurses that they must know everything about their patients during their shift, and they

must be able to offer each patient... the element of human touch." Quoting Florence Nightingale, Ms Kala often reminded those she mentored that "once the patients have no needs at all, that's when you know you've done a good job". The nursing practice doctorate graduate is the assistant director of nursing at the National Cancer Centre Singapore and an advanced practice nurse, specialising in oncology nursing with a focus on patients with head and neck cancers. Dr Chua, 44, is the nurse lead at the Allied Health Professional Clinic at the SingHealth Duke-NUS Head and Neck Centre, which is a one-stop clinic that helps patients with post-operation recovery process. Besides ensuring a high standard of personalised care for patients, she goes the extra mile to steer them towards recovery. When she realised that a number of them faced speech difficulties after surgery, Dr Chua donated the money from her SingHealth GCEO Awards' Outstanding Nurse Award in 2017 to purchase portable electronic writing tools for their use. She also



Dr Alice Chua (right), assistant director of nursing at the National Cancer Centre Singapore, with a colleague. PHOTO: NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE SINGAPORE

Alice Chua Veteran a strong believer in research, continuing education

Dr Alice Chua believes that nurses are in the best position to effect transformation in their patients' journey to recovery, and research and continuing education are needed to address patients' changing needs. The nursing practice doctorate graduate is the assistant director of nursing at the National Cancer Centre Singapore and an advanced practice nurse, specialising in oncology nursing with a focus on patients with head and neck cancers. Dr Chua, 44, is the nurse lead at the Allied Health Professional Clinic at the SingHealth Duke-NUS Head and Neck Centre, which is a one-stop clinic that helps patients with post-operation recovery process. Besides ensuring a high standard of personalised care for patients, she goes the extra mile to steer them towards recovery. When she realised that a number of them faced speech difficulties after surgery, Dr Chua donated the money from her SingHealth GCEO Awards' Outstanding Nurse Award in 2017 to purchase portable electronic writing tools for their use. She also

helped to source for effective and affordable communication aids for their long-term recovery. On a personal trip to Taiwan, she bought pneumatic speaking valves that can help make speaking easier for her patients, which were later tested and approved for use by the Health Sciences Authority. Last year, the 24-year nursing veteran obtained her doctorate in nursing practice from the School of Nursing at Duke University. As a member of the National Cancer Centre Singapore's nursing research committee, Dr Chua has also led six research studies, focusing on different aspects of optimising the care given to patients and shortening their length of hospitalisation. "I think it's important to stay on top of current trends and practices through continued research and education, especially so with a constantly changing healthcare landscape," said Dr Chua. "That way, we will then be able to value-add to our patients and guide them safely along their recovery journey," she added.

Cheryl Tan



Nursing director Chin Soh Mun of Dover Park Hospice strongly believes that no one should die alone. PHOTO: DOVER PARK HOSPICE

Chin Soh Mun She accompanies dying patients in their last moments

Nursing director Chin Soh Mun has pretty much seen it all in her 48 years in the profession, in roles ranging from acute to long-term care, but she has now found her true calling – palliative care at the Dover Park Hospice. Ms Chin, 66, is a fervent believer that no one should be alone in their last moments, so her commitment to her patients goes beyond attending to their physical needs. "It is about ensuring that their psycho-social and emotional needs are met, which requires a lot of experience and heart in the work (that we do), so it is crucial that we understand our patients beyond their illnesses," said Ms Chin. She takes time to understand her patients as people – knowing the important milestones in their lives and their family dynamics – so that their last wishes can be fulfilled and they die in peace. Despite the intense emotional demands of her day job, she goes even further by volunteering with the Dover Park Hospice's Vigil Programme, where she provides solace and comfort to patients in their final moments.

Volunteers are scheduled to sit with the patient day and night prior to their death. "I strongly believe that no one should die alone, so I volunteered to accompany these patients – who are either alone or their loved ones are unable to be with them in their final hours," she said. Another role involves overseeing plans to shift the hospice to the Integrated Care Hub at Health City Novena, which is expected to open next year. The shift will increase the hospice's bed numbers from 50 to 100. Ms Chin said: "Having started my career as a nurse in the paediatric ward during my training days and transitioning to a restructured hospital environment before moving into community nursing, my last eight years in palliative nursing has been an especially meaningful part of my career. "It's as though I have completed my journey through various phases of life together with my patients."

Cheryl Tan

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Five nurses get highest honour for outstanding work



Five persons received the President's Award for Nurses this year for their outstanding performance and contributions: (clockwise from bottom left) Ms Kala Narayanasamy, 59, Woodlands Health Campus' deputy director of nursing; Ms Patricia Yong, 56, Singapore General Hospital deputy director of nursing; Dr Alice Chua, 44, assistant director of nursing and advanced practice nurse at National Cancer Centre Singapore; Ms Chin Soh Mun, 66, director of nursing at Dover Park Hospice; and Ms Tay Yee Kian, 51, assistant director of nursing and advanced practice nurse at National University Health System. They each received a trophy, a certificate signed by President Halimah Yacob and a \$10,000 cash prize that can be used for professional and personal development. PHOTOS: WOODLANDS HEALTH CAMPUS, SGH, NCCS, DOVER PARK HOSPICE, NUHS [SEE HOME](#) B3

