

New scholarship launched for those studying physiotherapy, occupational and speech therapy and social work



The new scholarship is for a selected few seeking a career in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and social work. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

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SINGAPORE - One of the reasons that spurred Ms Cody Chew, 22, to study occupational therapy was her grandmother. The 85-year-old retired hawker had to give up some of her favourite activities - such as cooking - after undergoing a kneecap replacement about seven years ago and was not able to walk as well as before.

Said the former Meridian Junior College student: "I've witnessed how, as my grandparents were growing older, they felt unhappy that they were not able to do many things, being weaker. They had to forgo things that they liked to do, and rely on others."

Helping elderly patients like her grandmother to regain independence as they relearn simple daily tasks such as washing and dressing themselves is something Ms Chew hopes to do in her future career.

She said: "Being healthy does not only involve not having ailments, but also being able to have a quality of life that is satisfactory to the patient."

Ms Chew is one of 11 recipients of the Community Care Scholarship, the latest addition to the list of healthcare scholarships awarded by the Ministry of Health this year. These include the Healthcare Administration Scholarship and the Integrated Nursing Scholarship.

The new scholarship is for a selected few seeking a career in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and social work. It covers tuition fees and monthly allowances, among other costs, for scholarship holders.

On Wednesday (July 29), the 11 were among 120 scholarship recipients pursuing a career in the healthcare industry as doctors, nurses, allied healthcare professionals and administrators who were recognised in a virtual award ceremony attended by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong and Permanent Secretary for Health Chan Yeng Kit.

Mr Chan, guest of honour at the event, said the new Community Care Scholarship recognises the importance of allied healthcare professionals in delivering community care services, as well as the need to nurture the next generation of leaders who can make a difference in community care.

He added: "With an ageing population and rising chronic disease burden, there will be a lot of challenging work, particularly in the community care setting."

By 2030, about one in four Singaporeans will be 65 or older.

A local study conducted by Duke-NUS Medical School's Centre for Ageing Research and Education and the Ministry of Health found that about 37 per cent of survey respondents aged 60 and over reported three or more chronic health conditions in 2017, almost twice the 19.8 per cent in a 2009 study.

For another scholarship recipient, Ms Jace Ng, 19, the impending silver tsunami that will soon be hitting the shores of Singapore is a reason why she decided to go into physiotherapy.

She said most people think of physiotherapy as a form of rehabilitation when they are injured and need to regain mobility.

But physiotherapy could be a form of preventive care for the elderly as Singapore deals with an ageing population, she added, pointing out that the elderly can be severely injured in a fall, as they are more frail.

"Many elderly people don't actively engage in exercise or understand how exercise can help them become stronger. Physiotherapy can be a way to teach the elderly to maintain a healthy lifestyle and strengthen themselves, even before they get injured," she said.