

MEDIUM ORGANISATION

(250-999 EMPLOYEES)

International Medical University (IMU)

Keeping medical educators healthy

Educating oneself about one's body and health need not necessarily be confined to the classroom. Indeed, at International Medical University, the nation's leading private medical and healthcare university, health is not only taught but is also a way of life for its students and staff.

"As a health educator, we have always emphasised the welfare and health of our employees," says IMU director of human resources Francis Wen.

To demonstrate its commitment, the university set up a wellness steering committee in April to track and monitor the various initiatives that are to be carried out.

"Following the set-up of the committee, we also launched our IMU Wellness programme in May, which entails various initiatives," says Wen.

As part of extending health education to the staff, the university organises various health talks on diseases such as diabetes, obesity and immunisation, among others, he explains.

"In fact, we offer free flu vaccination to all our employees. They also have access to our in-house clinics and the sports facilities on campus."

Food health is also an important component of good health at IMU, and the institution prides itself on being at the "top of the class" in this. This initiative, Wen says proudly, has been validated by the Ministry of Health – IMU this year took second place for the *Medan Selera Bersih, Sihat & Selamat* (Clean, Healthy and Safe



Francis Wen

Food Courts operating in shopping complexes, hypermarkets or own buildings) at the national level.

With the help of the school's nutrition and dietetics lecturers, their canteen also provides a calorie label count. On top of that, the walls of the cafeteria are plastered with educational material pertaining to good nutrition.

Furthermore, a "Quit Smoking Clinic" was set up to help spearhead IMU's smoking cessation initiative. As a move to help smokers in general kick the habit, Wen says

the clinic is open to the IMU community and the public at large.

IMU also caters for stress management with employees able to choose from a range of unique therapies, such as music, art therapy and tai chi.

Wen explains that the university offers such variety because there is no one-size-fits-all approach to stress management.

Additionally, all employees subscribe to the AIA Vitality programme, which rewards them for trying to get healthy, he says.

"In the programme, employees enjoy

various incentives. For example, walking 7,500 steps a day for five days entitles them to a free movie ticket. They can even progress themselves through bronze, silver, gold and platinum membership to enjoy more goodies and rewards. Such incentives help encourage healthy lifestyles."

To further demonstrate its seriousness about wellness, the school encourages its deans and heads of departments to release their staff, when possible, to participate in its wellness activities every Friday from 4.30pm to 5.30pm.

"There may be an opportunity cost here but we believe wellness is equally important and would eventually bring a positive return on investment. When the staff are more engaged, they will go the extra mile for the organisation," Wen explains.

When it comes to making healthy choices, however, Wen says it is ultimately each individual's decision.

"As the saying goes, 'you can buy medicine but you can't buy health'. As an organisation, we will provide the best facilities, environment, motivation and programme. But to achieve the goal of living better, one has to put in his own sweat and perseverance, including discipline and commitment."

Nonetheless, with the various programmes in place and proactive engagement, IMU is determined to make it as easy as possible for its employees to make better choices with regard to their health.