

Learning amid the pandemic

SYARIFAH Hasanah Adeila from the International Medical University's (IMU) BSc (Hons) Dietetics with Nutrition (DN 1/17) programme has been waiting for the final year since enrolling in the course.

She shares, "Three years of theoretical knowledge in the IMU Dietetics with Nutrition programme had built up my curiosity and eagerness of exploring the real-life setting. Little did I know, the world would be going through a challenging 2020 as I stepped into my clinical placements. The pandemic changed the lives of many, particularly in the healthcare settings and impacted the mode of my clinical placement.

The university had initially switched to a hybrid learning method – students attend to cases physically on alternate days and conduct virtual case discussions on other days. However, in mid-October with the spike in the number of daily Covid-19 cases, clinical placements were converted to virtual mode, including the clinical phase, food service phase and community dietetics phase.

Despite the abrupt change, the virtual curriculum for our clinical placement was meticulously planned. Our clinical phase was substituted with case scenarios and dynamic case discussions.

Workshops were scheduled to highlight and emphasise key skills – enteral nutrition prescription and assessment, diagnosis, intervention and monitoring/evaluation (ADIME) writing.



Although we weren't physically present, the virtual clinical phase experience still instilled essential skills we needed as well as allowed us the opportunity to truly identify our gaps and further discuss these with our teammates in the presence of our clinical educators.

The community phase was by far one of my most interesting experiences as an undergraduate.

We were tasked to conduct a webinar for the public on selected topics – public education is a high demand skill for dietitians in the 21st century.

The preparation provided the opportunity to experience translating heavy, theoretical Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) knowledge into bite-size versions for the

public. It also enhanced my presentation and communication skills to further engage with the audience.

I had my doubts on how the food service phase could be conducted virtually but with the help of our local preceptors and university supervisors, it was an insightful phase.

We polished our skills on menu planning and learnt more on quality improvement in a food service setting. The food service virtual placement gave us the chance to understand the role of a food service dietitian through discussions with our local preceptors and assignments.

In a nutshell, my final year had not been what I imagined, but it

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was memorable, experiential learning.

With the world moving towards further technological modernisation, I would conclude there was no significant difference between physical and virtual mode in terms of knowledge gained."

IMU offers the four-year BSc (Hons) in Dietetics with Nutrition degree integrated with dietetics practicum in food service management, community dietetics and clinical dietetics as well as an opportunity to embark on a mobility experience abroad or locally.

The programme also offers credit transfer options to bachelor's degree in the University of Newcastle.

Graduates from the IMU programme can enter the workforce and begin their career as dietitians across a variety of clinical as well as non-clinical settings.

The next commencement dates for this programme are in July and September. If you have pre-university qualifications and an interest in Dietetics with Nutrition, apply online now towards a promising and rewarding career.

If you have just completed SPM and do not have pre-university qualification, the one-year IMU Foundation in Science is a preferred foundation and direct route for entry into any of the university's local degree programmes.

■ For more details, refer to www.imu.edu.my or email start@imu.edu.my or call IMU at 03-2731 7272.