

# Diabetes educator boosts healthcare quality

FOR the one in every five Malaysians who lives with diabetes, access to quality healthcare is important. Quality healthcare is doing the right things, for the right patient, at the right time, in the right way to achieve the best possible results.

Healthcare professionals who are trained in this respect, play a pivotal role in driving quality healthcare within their workplace.

Wong Soh San, who is an assistant nurse clinician and a diabetes educator, shows us how this is done.

"Very often, diabetes educators are recognised for their daily interaction with patients to empower them with self-management behaviour for improved health. However, many are not aware that diabetes educators can also improve the quality of healthcare provided at the organisational level," says Wong, who also leads a group of diabetes educators for a private hospital in Malaysia.

From her beginnings as a state registered nurse in Melaka, Wong's first interest in diabetes care bloomed from the desire to keep herself and her loved ones healthy.

"Diabetes runs in my family and I wanted to do something about this," says Wong.

Over the years, she worked closely with her patients to improve the care she gave to people living with diabetes. Her interactions with patients gave her insights into how patient-centred care can be empowering.

"I will always remember the elderly gentlemen I saw in my early practice days. Being an independent soul, he valued having

autonomy in all aspects of his life, including how he manages diabetes. The non-judgemental patient-centred conversations we had during his clinic visits provided a safe environment to develop a self-management plan that suited his lifestyle," says Wong.

In growing as a person, Wong progressed from being a positive influence on people living with diabetes to being a role model for her peers.

"In my first job, I worked alongside a credentialled diabetes educator who encouraged me to constantly improve as a practitioner and to do things that positively impact others around me," she recalls.

It was in this context that Wong took the IMU Postgraduate Diploma in Diabetes Management and Education from the International Medical University (IMU).

"Having a postgraduate diploma in this area can, and has, boosted my career, but I wanted something more", says Wong.

She integrated her postgraduate assignments into projects that mattered at her workplace. This included immediately putting to use her newly acquired knowledge and skills in diabetes care in her

clinic sessions.

Wong also conducted a clinical audit as part of an assignment. In completing this assignment, she used a scientific and systematic four-step process – the PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycle, to improve the use of self-monitoring of blood glucose (SMBG) in reducing the HbA1c of her patients.

Her audit work was recognised by the top management of her workplace and has since become a template for audit projects implemented in the team of diabetes educators from the 16 hospital branches that she now leads.

When asked if she is happy with her achievements, Wong says, "I will do my best to provide clinical nursing leadership and improve overall nursing practice and standards of care for patients. I have a passion to help others, and in doing so I found that I too grow as a person."

Working adults in the healthcare sectors or fresh graduates with a keen interest in diabetes education have the opportunity to earn their postgraduate diploma at IMU by either enrolling full-time in just one year or on a part-time basis within a three-year period.

Designed to suit working adults, this programme uses a

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blended learning model that incorporates online learning and clinical experience conducted at the student's own place of work. This delivery allows the student to maximise learning anywhere and anytime.

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