

# Upskilling as a diabetes educator

DIABETES is a serious problem that affects one in every six Malaysian adults. With a steady increase in the number of people diagnosed with diabetes, this complex lifestyle disease is here to stay. "I have had diabetes for a long-time. I want to optimise my condition. Sometimes though, my health takes a back seat when the pressure of life builds up," says a 55-year-old woman who has been living with diabetes for 15 years.

To manage their health, people living with diabetes must navigate daily self-management decisions and activities. Today, more patients are looking for support from healthcare providers who are trained in this area. Diabetes educators are specialists who have completed further studies to focus their efforts on helping people with diabetes to self-manage effectively and prevent complications. Upskilling in diabetes management and

education can give healthcare providers that niche for a more successful healthcare practice.

As a diabetes educator and nurse working for the Malaysian government, Grace Toh believes in the value of upskilling in this area with a postgraduate qualification. She says, "Some healthcare providers may already have certificate-level training in diabetes management. Taking a postgraduate qualification in this area is a good top-up for the specialised care needed in diabetes management. You never know your capabilities until you test them. Continuing your education supports the 'testing and retesting' needed to improve the care we provide."

By taking a postgraduate degree in Diabetes Management and Education at the International Medical University (IMU), Toh has learnt to integrate input from different disciplines to better

address the psychosocial needs of her patients who live with diabetes.

Nadhirah Mohd Khir who is a dietician and diabetes educator with a private hospital also took the same postgraduate qualification as Toh. "I took this qualification to upgrade my career. Now, my understanding of the management of diabetes is deeper. Most importantly, I have the practical knowledge to help my patients manage diabetes effectively," Nadhirah reflects.

Wong Soh San, who is a diabetes educator with a private chain of hospitals further adds that obtaining her postgraduate qualification in this area has given her the skills to become a reflective practitioner. "I can recognise my gaps and strengths as a practitioner and engage in a process of continuous learning to improve my clinical skills," says Wong.

Nah Ying Wa, a retail pharmacist, continued her training as a diabetes educator to improve the quality of care that her customers receive. Diverse people go to their local pharmacies for their health needs. "Before qualifying as a diabetes educator, I would mainly provide care concerning medication issues when customers come to me. Now, I can provide a comprehensive care plan that addresses my customer's individual needs," she remarks.

For Wong, improving her patient care skills in diabetes management has increased her referrals from doctors and her visibility as a go-to



Nadhirah Binti Mohd Khir.



Wong Soh San.

resource in this specialised area.

"Recently, I received an invitation to speak on diabetes care at a nursing school to nursing students at a workshop," she enthuses. When asked if getting a postgraduate degree in diabetes care is worthwhile, Nadhirah replies, "Specialising in this area is worth the investment of my time and money as I can develop my career to the next level as a dietician who specialises in managing diabetes."

## Progression path

Working adults in healthcare sectors or fresh graduates with a keen interest in diabetes education have the opportunity to upskill with a postgraduate degree at IMU by either taking the conventional learning pathway with classes at

the university campus or the 100% online learning experience via Open Distance Learning. Designed to suit working adults, this programme incorporates a multi-disciplinary approach to diabetes care in a blended learning model that includes both online and in-person learning. This delivery allows the student to make meaningful connections with the different healthcare disciplines involved in diabetes care.

The next commencement of this programme is in May 2023. If you are interested to join this programme, make an online application today.

■ For more information on this or our other postgraduate programmes, call 03-2731 7272, email [postgraduate@imu.edu.my](mailto:postgraduate@imu.edu.my) or visit [www.imu.edu.my](http://www.imu.edu.my).

Competent diabetes educators help patients better manage their diabetes.

