

ALEXANDRA HEALTH

PROVIDING A HELPING HAND

As a profession that concerns itself with restoring function and movement to disabled limbs and bodies, physiotherapists face difficult yet rewarding challenges on a daily basis. Healthcare Scholar Melissa Ng talks us through her fulfilling experience so far.

By Jules Low



Melissa Ng
Healthcare Scholar

Designation: Physiotherapist, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

Studied: Bachelor in Science (Physiotherapy), Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Diploma in Physiotherapy, Nanyang Polytechnic

For the able-bodied amongst us, the ability to move about freely is something that we often take for granted. But disease or trauma can render our limbs weak and ineffectual, hamper our mobility and cause considerable inconvenience to our daily routines.

This is where Physiotherapists come in, using various treatments such as exercises, electrotherapy modalities and manual therapies to help patients regain as much physical independence as possible.

For Melissa Ng, the Physiotherapist at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital finds joy in helping her patients get back on their feet. Even with two years of experience in the field under her belt, she is ever-focused on learning more in order to contribute to Singapore's healthcare sector and her patients.

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN BECOMING A PHYSIOTHERAPIST?

Melissa Ng: My first encounter with a

Physiotherapist was when I was in Junior College. Back then, I was a patient seeking treatment for my sporting injuries. Over the course of many sessions, my curiosity was piqued by what physiotherapists had to offer. I began to develop an interest in this field and before I knew it, my interest had become my calling. The rest, as they say, is history.

TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PHYSIOTHERAPIST.

Melissa: My roles and responsibilities vary according to the needs and types of patients who are referred to me by the medical team. Generally, a thorough assessment and analysis is first performed to understand a patient's unique background and specific strengths, weaknesses and problems prior to devising a treatment plan.

At Alexandra Health, we are exposed to working opportunities in the various medical disciplines and rehabilitation settings. These

include inpatient and outpatient clinics, the latter of which can be based either in the community or the home. We also deal with patients in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where optimising breathing and commencing early rehabilitation whenever suitable are the priorities. And when assisting patients who have undergone surgeries, our objective is to increase mobility while still respecting any post-operative pain the patient may be experiencing. In addition, we work with elderly patients, where we help to promote social engagement, enhance function and prevent falls.

Furthermore, physiotherapists play a crucial role in preventive medicine. With our understanding of the effects of chronic illnesses, we provide proper education coupled with therapeutic exercise programmes to improve, maintain or slow the deterioration

of function or hinder the progress of medical conditions such as diabetes, respiratory and cardiac disorders. In doing so, we empower patients and their loved ones to manage their own care more effectively.

SHARE WITH US ABOUT SOME MEMORABLE TAKEAWAYS FROM YOUR JOB.

Melissa: I meet people from all walks of life who speak different languages and come from different cultural backgrounds. Communication becomes a challenge when a common language is absent. On a brighter note, it has provided grounds for me to learn new languages and find out more about other cultures. At Alexandra Health, we are fortunate that basic conversational language classes in Malay and Mandarin are provided to staff to help us master new languages.

As a healthcare professional, I inevitably come face-to-face with the realities of life and a myriad of emotions. Occasionally, this can be mentally and emotionally taxing. However, working together with a group of empathetic and encouraging colleagues certainly makes the journey easier.

Each day is full of exciting moments as I move from patient to patient. They never fail to inspire and encourage me with their resilience, humour, gratitude and willingness to share their life experiences. Regardless of how tiring work can be, the satisfaction from my job and the company of my like-minded colleagues still put a happy closure to each day! These memories and friendships are here to stay, and they really motivate and inspire me to do even more for my patients.

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT HAVE YOU BEEN GIVEN AS A SCHOLAR?

Melissa: At Alexandra Health, numerous opportunities are provided for us to develop clinical, administrative and interpersonal skills through an array of professional training seminars, dialogues and workshops on people management and service skills.

Through the years, I have grown tremendously as a clinician and even more as a person. The mentoring support from my seniors at work has helped me to develop my clinical skills, especially in the areas of analysis, interpretation, manual handling and communication. Interacting with patients has opened my eyes to the realities of life and reinforced the importance of valuing life, our loved ones and the things that we have.

And as we often find ourselves working together with healthcare professionals from other areas, it also becomes even more important to uphold the value of teamwork and cultivate understanding between team members.

The multitude of opportunities available has also afforded me the freedom to think about my own career goals and aspirations. One of my definite goals is to further develop my expertise so that I can better treat and help my patients effectively. Personally, I hope to venture into step-down care as I enjoy it a lot. I have also considered pursuing a Master's degree in the near future!

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ASPIRING HEALTHCARE SCHOLARS?

Melissa: If you have the passion to reach out and make a difference in the lives of others, regardless of where they are from, then this is where your journey begins. The initial road may be bumpy with countless hurdles to overcome, but with perseverance you will see yourself grow beyond your wildest expectations. Be on your toes and carry with you an inquisitive and open mind as the healthcare industry is constantly evolving. Above all, nurture a heart of love that takes a patient-centric approach to all aspects of patient care. As Blessed Mother Teresa aptly puts it, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."■

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