MOH aims to increase intake of nursing students

SINGAPORE - The Ministry of Health (MOH) aims to expand the pool of locally trained healthcare workers to address manpower shortages.

The MOH aims to increase the annual intake of nursing students at tertiary institutions from the current 1,700 to 2,000 by 2015.

The reform initiatives include the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and Institute of Technical Education.

For all health courses, the intake is to rise from 270 to 300 by 2014.

There are about 23,500 registered nurses in Singapore and 13% are foreigners.

As Singapore moves towards reducing the reliance on foreign manpower, expanding the pipeline of local nurses is a key focus.

There are nine nursing degrees for aspiring nurses. A new nursing degree programme offered by the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) in partnership with the University of Manchester Faculty of Health in September 2011 will offer upgrading opportunities for nursing diploma graduates, adding to the pool of degree-trained nurses.

Some nursing students said the image of the profession needs to be improved.

Raymon Ng, a final year student at Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation, said: "In Singapore, when you mention nursing, they will have this stereotype that nursing is only for old people or the graduating class is only for old people. But in countries like America, there are a lot of degree holders that are nurses, so I think it will take some time before they realise that nursing is more than just 'protection'."

Another student, Ce Li Hean said: "I think students need to learn that nursing isn't just a menial labour but play a very critical role in patient care."

For doctors, MOH hopes to encourage those who are studying medicine overseas to return to Singapore by giving them a pre-employment grant in order to increase the pool of doctors here.

Besides increasing the intake at National University of Singapore's Singapore University of Technology and Design (NUS) Graduate Medical School, the opening of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in 2013 will help to build up the local training pipeline for doctors.

Together, the three schools target to take in 500 students annually, up from the 330 students last year.

MOH also offers a master programme in speech and language pathology to train speech therapists. Currently, the programme has a total intake of 13 students, up from its initial overall intake of 10 students in 2007.

We recommend

- Where to develop a localised recreational route (Singapore)
- New in the public library: Disability aid
- More help for students with physical disabilities
- More help to increase intake of nursing students
- More help to develop an inclusive educational curriculum
- More help to make the workplace accessible
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