

# Brain disease spurred him to be nurse

By PEARL LEE

WHEN a rare brain disease almost killed him, Mr Jonathan Lim pledged to spend the rest of his days helping others.

He decided to train as a nurse, hoping to make a difference to those in need.

Nine years on, Mr Lim is one of 251 students to receive a health-care scholarship.

Yesterday's ceremony was the culmination of a journey that began when he developed a high fever at the age of 13.

He was taken to hospital and diagnosed with acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, a

brain disease that impairs the nerve impulses.

It left him temporarily paralysed from the chest down, and his parents were told to prepare for the worst.

"I was not able to move, and I was lying there thinking about my life," Mr Lim said. "And I made a promise to myself then, that if I could pull through, I will dedicate my life to helping people in need."

Now aged 22, the former Nanyang Polytechnic nursing student plans to pursue a degree in the same subject at the Singapore Institute of Technology in September. Of this

year's scholarships, 223 went to undergraduate students and 28 to postgraduates. Last year, only 172 were awarded.

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said this was "an indication of the increasing number of top quality students with a keen passion and commitment to a public health-care career".

He added that the scholarships are being rebranded in an attempt to "make them more effective in attracting the local talent we need". The top-tier Health Science Scholarship will now be called the Healthcare Merit Scholarship while the Health Science and Nursing

Scholarship will be renamed the Healthcare Merit Award.

Mr Gan said the Health Ministry will give its scholarship holders more opportunities to take part in professional seminars, community projects, exchange programmes and internships. "This would in turn broaden their exposure and further enrich their overall experience and development during the course of their studies."

More mid-term health-care scholarships will be given to promising Singaporean undergraduates, who can apply for them while at university.

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