New degree courses for allied health professionals from 2016

By Salma Khalik, Senior Health Correspondent

SINGAPORE - New degree courses in four allied health professions - physiotherapy, occupational therapy, diagnostic radiography and radiation therapy - will be offered from 2016. The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) will take in 235 students for the new courses. Nanyang Polytechnic, which has been teaching these subjects as a diploma course since 1992, will take in its last batch of students next year.

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said the move is "an evolution in our training and professional development plans for our healthcare professionals".

He was speaking at an event on Saturday to mark the next stage of the building of the new Sengkang General and Community hospitals. The two hospitals will add 1,400 beds when they open in 2018. He said: "Building more hospitals and adding more beds is not a sustainable long-term approach. We can no longer rely on a hospital-centric system as patients' needs become more complex, which also means they require longer term care outside the hospital setting."

On new degree courses, he said therapists will need to get the requisite skills and knowledge to help their patients, including the elderly, get better rehabilitation and preventive care. The courses will also give young people here "a more diverse range of careers to fulfill their aspirations," he said.