

It takes a team to manage diabetes

DIABETES is a chronic and progressive disorder that when poorly controlled, can cause complications that damage all organs in the body.

"What we do in our daily life affects how quickly diabetes progresses. The daily activities of a person living with diabetes include healthy eating, being more active, monitoring health goals, taking medication and reducing risks," says Dr Lee Ching Li, programme director of an IMU postgraduate programme qualifying diabetes educators.

A multidisciplinary approach – where healthcare professionals from different disciplines work together to manage diabetes – can help address this disturbing problem. This sentiment is shared by Malaysian healthcare practitioners who are also alumni of the IMU Postgraduate Diploma in Diabetes Management and Education.

Grace Toh Peik Khiam, a nurse and government servant says, "The multidisciplinary approach to diabetes care should occur at the primary, secondary and tertiary setting because it ultimately benefits the patient."

Angela Teh Li Leng, a dietitian with a private hospital adds that collaboration and good communication between the different disciplines involved is key to successfully managing diabetes.

Toh reflects, "As a nurse and diabetes educator, there are times when my patient needs a referral to other healthcare disciplines. I have learnt that input from a different discipline can help me address the psychosocial needs of my patients who live with diabetes."

Toh realised this through the many patient case discussions she had with her coursemates and lecturers.

"My most memorable session was an online Problem-Based Learning session on in-patient care of diabetes. This session was



Grace Toh Peik Khiam.

facilitated by an endocrinologist with coursemates who included fellow nurses, dietitians, and pharmacists. With my nursing background, I had good peri-operative knowledge and experience, but this alone is not enough to manage the case. Input from the dietitian and pharmacist helped us optimise patient blood glucose control," says Toh.

Teh also enjoyed the Problem-Based Learning session saying, "It was fun breaking down the case study together with peers who were nurses, dietitians, and pharmacists. When the discussion was guided by the endocrinologist, I could see how the different disciplines can work together for the patient."

Teh believes she has also improved the way she provides diabetes education to the patients she sees daily.

"I was able to hone my skills in patient education by upgrading theoretical knowledge on diabetes education and observing how my mentors and peers from



Angela Teh Li Leng.

different disciplines provide diabetes education to patients," she says.

Both Toh and Teh successfully completed their IMU postgraduate qualification as diabetes educators amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Teh shares, "I chose the IMU postgraduate programme because it has a good blend of theory and practical work to support my pursuit of healthcare knowledge and skills. Balancing life, work and study is possible."

Sharing this growth mindset, Toh adds, "I encourage healthcare providers to train as diabetes educators. Some healthcare providers may already have certificate level training in diabetes management. However, taking a postgraduate qualification in this area is a good top-up for the specialised care needed in diabetes management."

Working adults in the healthcare sector or fresh graduates with a keen interest in diabetes education have the opportunity to upskill with a postgraduate degree at IMU by either enrolling full-time for one year or on a

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part-time basis within a three-year period.

Designed to suit working adults, this programme incorporates a multi-disciplinary, 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.

IMU offers postgraduate programmes including master in science programmes in Public Health, Analytical and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Molecular Medicine, Acupuncture and Pharmacy Practice; Master of Counselling; postgraduate diplomas in Diabetes Management and Education, Implant Dentistry, Endodontics and Prosthodontics; postgraduate programmes in Health Professions Education, Health Informatics and Analytics and Business Administration in Healthcare Management as well as MSc and PhD in Medical and Health Sciences.

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