



\$5 subsidised health screening available for younger Singaporeans found at risk of diabetes



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New work and learn SkillsFuture programme launched for pharmacy sector



Pharmacy technicians picking up baskets containing medication for patients at the front counter at the SGH outpatient pharmacy. PHOTO: ST FILE

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SINGAPORE - Pharmacy technician Izyan Hamizah Jaffar, 22, has been working at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital for more than two years, and wanted to upgrade her skills.

Recognising her potential, the hospital signed her up for the SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programme for pharmacy technicians - a one and a half year structured work-learn programme which will help accelerate her career advancement.

Ms Izyan, who graduated with a diploma in pharmaceutical sciences from Nanyang Polytechnic in 2015, said she aims to be a senior pharmacy technician and the course she went for taught her about inventory management, which she hopes she can apply in her hospital work.

At the polytechnic on Wednesday (Aug 2), the first batch of 24 students in the SkillsFuture programme, launched officially on the same day, received a letter of offer for an Advanced Diploma in Pharmaceutical Sciences at the inaugural Pharmaceutical Sciences Forum.

While pharmaceutical sciences diploma holders are equipped with broad-based, basic skills, the SkillsFuture programme prepares them for in-demand ones such as a higher level of medication reconciliation and management, as well as working with greater automation in hospitals today.

Associate Professor Lita Chew, chief pharmacist at the Ministry of Health (MOH), who mooted the programme, said the Government has a "very clear end in mind" with it.

Assoc Prof Chew said that the Government has identified areas in pharmacy with the potential for workers in those fields to have their roles expanded. For instance, a person from a diploma course may not have the skills to prepare a mixture of sterile drugs. But he could get training for it and be able to take on work for that.

The programme is developed in collaboration with Nanyang Polytechnic and participants are referred to the programme by public health institutions which employ them.

Besides diploma holders in pharmaceutical sciences, those from other diploma courses can also sign up for the programme, provided they are working for participating employers, such as Parkway hospitals. In addition, they need to have at least two years of relevant working experience and have passed the Certified Pharmacy Technician Course conducted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.

Speaking at the Wednesday event where she officially launched the programme, Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor said pharmacists will need to provide more specialised care to acute patients with complex diseases or high-risk drugs requiring close monitoring in the future.

The pharmacy workforce will also have to look into extending its medication management services to patients with chronic diseases at homes or in the community, which will require pharmacists to be more highly skilled and open to the use of technology, she added.

To support pharmacy technicians' career advancement, MOH revised the career and development framework for them in 2014.

Three additional executive job levels were introduced and four areas of role expansion were identified in distribution, technical, quality assurance and patient care services.

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