

Creating a Positive Impact on Singapore Healthcare

By Jennifer Lee, Deputy Manager, SMA Charity Fund

FOUR DUKE-NUS Graduate Medical School students accepted bursaries given by the SMA Charity Fund (SMACF) last month, forming the inaugural batch of SMA Medical Students' Assistance Fund bursary recipients from their institution. The bursary aims to help with the beneficiaries' living expenses, ensuring that they are able to pursue medical education without undue financial worries. Since SMACF started in 2013, we also have been working with the other two local medical schools to provide financial support to students from less privileged families.

Two of the Duke-NUS bursary recipients, Tan Wan Ying and Feng Ting Ting, reveal how SMACF has helped them in their journey towards realising their dreams of becoming a medical doctor.

Tan Wan Ying, MS1

Graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science (Honours) (Occupational Therapy) from the University of Sydney and a Diploma in Occupational Therapy (Merit) from Nanyang Polytechnic

Science and human physiology have always been fascinating to me since I was young. After completing my first degree under the National Healthcare Group (NHG) Health Sciences Scholarship, I worked as an occupational therapist for about four-and-a-half years. After serving my bond with NHG, I decided to read Medicine, with the hope of advancing my skills and knowledge to serve individuals in need of relief and comfort. My interest in Geriatric Medicine had been sparked off by my prior exposure to the rehabilitation of elderly patients. I enjoy interacting with the elderly and helping them to improve or maintain their health in their later years, and believe that successful ageing is possible through educating and empowering them and their family members.

When I was accepted into Duke-NUS, I was thankful for the opportunity to study, but at the same time, worried about the financial burden. Though I have worked for a while and managed to save some money, my finances are still tight due



Wan Ying (second from right) with her classmates at their white coat ceremony in August

to family commitments. The bursary given by SMACF has helped to supplement my living expenses, which allows me to focus on my studies and not worry about surviving on a tight budget every month. I can now concentrate on working towards becoming a medical doctor who listens, comforts, and offers support with compassion and humility to patients. I look forward to the day when I can carry on the medical profession's tradition of supporting and committing to the education of future generations of doctors.

Feng Ting Ting, MS3

Graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Honours) (Biomedical Science) from the National University of Singapore (NUS), Master of Science from NUS, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from Nanyang Technological University

I have always felt that Medicine was a noble profession, as doctors often put the needs of patients above their own. I recall being very discouraged when I was not able to pursue an undergraduate degree in Medicine. Although I was given a scholarship to pursue my earlier education in biomedical science, deep down, I knew that Medicine was and always will be my first choice. Finally being able to pursue my passion in Duke-NUS has made my journey even more meaningful thus far, though at the back of my mind, I have always worried about the costs involved.

When I first came to know about SMACF, I was glad that we were given this additional avenue of support, even though we were postgraduate students. The bursary given by SMACF supports my living expenses, so that I do not need to overstretch myself by taking up a part-time job. The financial support given will ensure that I am able to focus better on my studies.

Receiving this bursary has made me even more determined to maintain high academic standards and espouse the ethos of the medical profession as I pursue my dream – to be a doctor who not only treats with her hands, but also with her heart, and even to contribute to the education of future doctors.

Separately, 30 students from the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine also received the SMA Medical Students' Assistance Fund bursary for the academic year 2014/2015, representing about a 50% increase in the number of recipients from the school. In addition, SMACF is also working with the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine to finalise the selection of bursary recipients from their student population.



Ting Ting (first from left) with her colleagues from an O&G posting at KK Women's and Children's Hospital earlier this year

From this year onwards, recipients of the SMA Medical Students' Assistance Fund bursary will receive the quantum of \$5,000 per academic year, which will support their living expenses.

Besides providing bursaries to support the living expenses of medical students from less privileged families, SMACF also spurs them on in their pursuit of medical training and knowledge. SMACF's other strategic thrust is advocating for volunteerism among the medical profession, and seeks to inculcate altruism in medical students. To this end, SMACF recently sent 18 students to the inaugural International Conference on Humanitarian Medical Missions at The Academia, held from 30 October to 1 November. To find about SMACF and what we do, please visit <http://www.sma.org.sg/smacares>. ■

Support the dreams and aspirations of our medical students by making a gift to SMACF today! Online donations can be made through the SG Gives website at <http://www.sggives.org/smacf>. All donations will enjoy 2.5 times tax deductions.

Public Health Screening 2014 – Promoting Health, Spreading Awareness

Public Health Screening (PHS) is an annual event, organised by the NUS Medical Society, which aims to raise health awareness among the public. This year's screening was held from 11 to 12 October at Clementi Central, and SMACF was one of the working partners for the event.

One of the largest free public health screenings to benefit the community, the event comprised a medical screening and an educational exhibition. Through a core framework of preventive medicine, PHS 2014 was focused on the primary and secondary prevention of diseases in the community. Primary prevention refers to the prevention of the early onset of disease, and secondary prevention aims to detect the disease early and slow down its progression.

Supporting meaningful healthcare events, like PHS 2014, is part of SMACF's efforts to promote volunteerism. ■

