A’s not enough for 3rd medical school

NTU’s venture with Imperial College to put ‘humanity’ back into patient care

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STRAIGHT A’s alone will not be enough to get you into Singapore’s third medical school.

The one to be set up by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Imperial College London will also require its students to be team players, relate well to people and have solid communication skills.

Imperial College officials here to ink their partnership with NTU said the school wants to produce doctors who will not only have sound medical knowledge, but also the “humanity” to give patient-centred care.

It is about bringing “service” back to medicine, about producing “the kind of doctors you and I would want to be treated by”, said Professor Martyn Partridge, who will be the senior vice-dean of the school, set to open in 2013.

The professor of respiratory medicine at Imperial College added: “There’s been a danger that we’ve lost that feeling of service in my profession. If it’s important for a restaurant or hotel, then it quite definitely has to be at the centre when we offer support to people who are ill, elderly or frightened.”

NTU president Su Guanping said students will be exposed to patients from their first year and deal with them in various health-care settings, including hospitals, polyclinics and nursing homes. Student doctors will also be trained to lead teams and be comfortable with technology. To ensure the students can coordinate care across the spectrum of health-care providers, they will be put into multi-disciplinary teams made up of nurses and allied health-care professionals.

Dr Su, promising that the curriculum “will be nothing short of world-class”, said: “Adapted from Imperial’s renowned undergraduate medical curriculum and jointly developed with NTU, it will be designed to enhance the Singapore medical health-care system, taking advantage of NTU’s strengths in engineering and business management.”

The school will start with 50 students and build up to 150 a year over five years.

Education Minister Ng Eng Hen, himself a doctor before he entered politics, witnessed the signing of the agreement. He said the school will come up with ways to train doctors to meet health-care challenges.

Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan, also present at the signing, said a third medical school was needed, given the needs of a growing and ageing population.

Agency for Science, Technology and Research chairman Lim Chuan Poh, who is on NTU’s board of trustees, has been named chairman of the school’s pro-temp governing board.

He said the school will not be a lesser cousin to the medical schools here and that he was sure it will draw top students, just like the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore and the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School.

NUS hits its maximum enrollment of 300 next year; Duke took in 56 students last year.
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