Training docs at newest med school to serve with heart

Lee Kong Chian medical school, which officially opened yesterday, pairs students with patients who have long-term needs in project

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Singapore’s youngest medical school officially opened its doors yesterday morning, four years after it first started operation.

The first students from the 440-strong cohort at Nanyang Technological University’s (NTU) Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine will graduate next year.

At yesterday’s opening ceremony, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said the new school is helping to train doctors to serve with heart through, for instance, its community programme – the Long-Term Patient Project. It pairs students with patients who have long-term, non-acute needs.

“This helps to provide additional support for these patients,” said Mr Teo. “It also encourages our budding doctors to have a deep understanding of the complex interactions between treatment of disease and total patient health and well-being.”

Mr Teo also said it was important to use technology to deliver better medical care, especially in an era where diseases evolve quickly and are transmitted across borders.

“We must improve cross-border coordination to combat such threats more effectively,” he said.

“Big data and smart systems can help to sense and model the spread of diseases, and support contact tracing.”

Plans to build the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine were first announced in 2010. It took in its first batch of 54 students in 2013.

The school is a collaboration between NTU and Imperial College London, with a curriculum based closely on Imperial’s, with adaptations to suit Singapore’s needs.

It has two buildings – the Experimental Medicine Building at the main NTU campus in Jurong West, and the Clinical Sciences Building in Novena, where yesterday’s ceremony was held. The 20-storey building is next to Tan Tock Seng Hospital, and close to some specialist centres and community care services.

The school focuses on team-based learning, where students often listen to pre-recorded lectures from academics at Imperial before coming together to discuss the material in class, often with local subject experts.

“I love the independence and the way the curriculum is structured,” said fourth-year student Nicholas Lee. “It helps me remember better.”

Professor Bertil Andersson, who is NTU president, said: “The trademark of any successful joint programme is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

“And today... we have a unique medical school that we couldn’t have created each on our own, and of that we can truly be proud.”

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Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine students in the Centre for Clinical Simulation ward. The school is a collaboration between NTU and Imperial College London, with a curriculum that is based closely on Imperial’s but adapted to suit local needs. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH