SAF scholar will be able to treat patients, shape policy changes

ADELINE TAN

She was walking home with her mother last year when she saw an elderly man collapse in front of her.

Miss Oh Hui Xin, then 18, rushed to the man and quickly called for an ambulance. While waiting for it to arrive, she tried to keep the man awake by talking to him and tried to make him as comfortable as possible.

As he drifted into unconsciousness, Miss Oh realised he was suffering from a heart attack.

Taking instructions from paramedics over the phone, she performed assisted cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on the man until the ambulance arrived.

The 19-year-old former Raffles Institution student said: “I was definitely feeling quite anxious at that time, but I told myself that I had to think level-headedly so I could make decisions.”

A few hours later, the family told her that the man did not survive.

That incident cemented her decision to be a doctor and she applied to the Lee Kong Chian (LKC) School of Medicine early this year.

She is part of the 138 LKC medicine students joining this year, the largest cohort since the school’s first intake in 2013.

The incident also changed Miss Oh’s perspective about the responsibilities of a doctor.

She said: “This experience shaped the reality of situations that doctors face, that we can’t save lives all the time. Even if we are not able to cure them, we can comfort them and their families.”

Miss Oh attended the man’s wake and shared his last moments with his family.

She added: “That made me realise that the disease does not just affect the patient, but it also affects the family members.”

As a recipient of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Medicine Scholarship, Miss Oh will go on to become a medical officer in the SAF after her six years of medical school and training.

Working in both the healthcare and the defence sectors gives her a chance to go beyond the usual scope of a doctor.

She will not only get to treat patients, she will also be able to work on medical administration in the SAF and engage in policy planning.

She said: “It’s a blessing to be able to interact with patients on a direct level, and at the same time, effect change on a larger scale and serve a bigger purpose.”

tanpya@sph.com.sg