Coming: More doctors in 2020

By Lisa Oon

More doctors will be trained and developed to meet Singapore’s health-care needs in 2020 and beyond, said Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong.

He was speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at its Novena Campus in Mandalay Road yesterday. Also at the event was Minister for Education Heng Swee Keat.

The school will take in its first batch of 50 students in August next year for the five-year undergraduate medical degree programme. There are plans to up the intake to 150 by 2018.

The campus is on a historical site where a hostel for medical students was built in 1924. The hostel is being restored for use as the school’s headquarters.

A high-rise Clinical Sciences Building is being built next to it. The headquarters will be ready by June next year, in time for the first intake. The Clinical Sciences Building is expected to be ready in 2015.

The school is being set up by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), in partnership with Imperial College London.

Plans for a dual campus were also unveiled yesterday, with a new Experimental Medicine Building at NTU’s Yunnan Garden Campus.

To meet the rising health-care needs of a growing and rapidly ageing society, Mr Gan said in his speech: “We will need to build more health-care facilities, provide more services, and train more health-care manpower.”

Singapore’s population has grown by 25 per cent over the last decade and will continue to grow over the next decade. It is expected that by 2050, one in five Singaporeans will be above the age of 65.

Mr Gan said that Singapore has invested heavily to grow and develop its pool of doctors. The recruitment of qualified overseas-trained Singaporean doctors has also been ramped up.

He said: “The impact of these investments in growing our manpower pipelines has been considerable.”

Last year, 279 doctors graduated from local medical schools and 110 overseas-trained Singaporean doctors were brought back here.

Mr Gan stressed the need for a health-care system that operates as an integrated whole to deliver patient-centric care.

He said: “We also need to have doctors who are able to navigate this integrated health-care system to provide patients with seamless care...whether it is in the polyclinics, acute hospitals or long-term care facilities.”

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