Compassion is key at new med school

Students need to get approval of both staff and patients during attachments

By LIN ZHAOWEI

UNDERGRADUATES at the upcoming Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine will need to get the thumbs-up from not just doctors and nurses but also patients during their attachments.

This is to produce doctors who are both competent and compassionate, said senior vice-dean Martyn Partridge:

"This is about putting service back into medicine," he said, noting that the school will ensure that "we really are producing doctors who have patients at the centre of everything they do."

The students will have their first clinical experience early - during the third week in a polyclinic as part of their orientation.

The school will take its first batch of 50 undergraduates next year. The intake will rise to 150 by 2018.

Mr Gan noted that Singapore has been expanding its pool of doctors by increasing the annual undergraduate intake at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and by opening the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School in 2007.

These two schools now take in a total of 350 students yearly. Mr Gan said that with more opportunities available for a local medical education, he believes more Singaporeans will choose to study here and contribute to the country's health-care sector.

The Government has also been recruiting more qualified Singaporean doctors who were trained overseas. Last year, 110 such doctors were hired, compared with 40 a decade ago.

Yesterday's ceremony was held in Mandalay Road, site of the new school's Novena campus. Its headquarters will be housed there in a former hostel for medical students built in 1924. Next to the HQ, the Clinical Sciences Building will be completed by 2015.

Both buildings will eventually be linked to TTSH 200m away.

At NTU's main campus in Jurong, the Experimental Medicine Building will be ready by 2015. It is located in the varsity's biomedical engineering cluster, to encourage interdisciplinary research.

Students will take lessons at both campuses during their five-year course. Before the new buildings are completed, classes will be held at the school's interim site at NTU's Research Techno Plaza.

The school will start accepting undergraduate applications in December. Applicants have to sit the British BioMedical Admissions Test in November as part of the entry requirements.