

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/parenting-education/fracturing-her-jaw-in-a-fall-inspired-ntu-student-to-turn-down>

THE STRAITS TIMES

Fracturing her jaw in a fall inspired NTU student to study medicine



Miss Loh Pei Yi was one of 168 medical students who have enrolled in the NTU Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine this year. PHOTO: NTU SINGAPORE



Ang Qing

SINGAPORE - When she was 17, Loh Pei Yi, then a student of NUS High School of Mathematics and Science, fell on her face on campus, fracturing her jaw and causing her teeth to pierce through her lips.

The care and clear explanations of her injury provided by medical staff during her nine-month recovery period motivated the incoming Nanyang Technological University (NTU) student to aim to be a doctor.

In making her choice, she turned down offers from top universities and prestigious scholarships, including the Singapore Academic Award to study at the University of Cambridge, as well as the Public Service Commission (Engineering) Scholarship.

The 19-year-old was one of 168 medical students who have enrolled in the NTU Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine) this year. The LKCMedicine White Coat Ceremony 2021 was held on Wednesday (Sept 1).

On Tuesday, LKCMedicine emerged as the first medical school in Singapore to win the international Aspire Award for excellence in curriculum development. The international award is developed by international authorities in medical education and educational bodies, led by the Association for Medical Education in Europe.

The decision to study medicine was far from straightforward for Miss Loh, who nearly became a defence chemist, having been offered a Mindef Defence Merit Scholarship and a Defence Science and Technology Agency scholarship.

She sees battling illness as simply another form of defence against adversaries within and outside the human body.

Said Miss Loh: "While the idea of leveraging science to fortify national security resonated with me... I just cherish the opportunity to develop rapport and trust in things like bedside interactions, breaking bad news, discussing treatment plans and taking medical histories."

This interest began in 2011 after Miss Loh's father, who was in his 40s then, suffered a heart attack.

"It was kind of frightening for me at such a young age and also pained me to see him being so vulnerable when he would normally be the strong one who protects the whole family," said Miss Loh, who was nine years old then.

In the months that followed, the care and concern of the doctor and multidisciplinary team for her father and the whole family touched Miss Loh, and this was also a factor that made her opt for medicine.

Her determination to help others grew in her encounters with those who came to Meet-the-People sessions where she volunteered. In particular, there was a Grab driver who struggled to pay his bills because of medical problems. This made her realise that medical issues were often intertwined with social issues.

Among NTU's incoming cohort of medical students this year, its biggest so far, is Singapore Sports School alumnus Nicholas Rachmadi, who was inspired to join the medical profession after witnessing numerous sports injuries suffered by his friends.



Singapore Sports School alumnus Nicholas Rachmadi was inspired to join the medical profession after witnessing numerous sports injuries suffered by his friends. PHOTO: NTU SINGAPORE

These included a schoolmate who nearly lost the ability to walk because of a near-fatal cycling accident in 2014, and Mr Rachmadi's roommate who suffered minor memory loss because of a fall during a gymnastics competition before the International Baccalaureate examinations.

Mr Rachmadi, 19, a triathlete, also tore one of his thigh muscles while training two months before the SEA Games selection race in 2019.

"More than the physical pain, it was the emotional distress of not being able to train," he said. "What if I can't race, what if I can't get back to top condition?"

With an understanding medical team who assured him that he could get back to racing, he managed to come in first at the selection trials and bag silver for a duathlon (mixed relay) in his debut at the SEA Games in the Philippines that year.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Normal stream student achieves his dream of becoming a doctor

SMU to collaborate with Duke-NUS in new post-grad medicine pathway

Equipped with an athlete's perspective, Mr Rachmadi hopes to become a doctor who can empathise with sportsmen and sportswomen.

He said: "I plan to become both a doctor and an athlete, so I'm planning to qualify for next year's SEA Games (while I am in) medical school."

For fellow student Muhammad Haziq Rohani, 19, studying medicine was an opportunity to help better the lives of friends he met online, from Afghanistan and Syria, who had described their situation.



For Mr Muhammad Haziq Rohani, taking medicine was an opportunity to help better the lives of friends he met online. PHOTO: NTU SINGAPORE

He said: "Some of them are treated like second-class citizens and treated like an afterthought... I think it's objectively good to use the medical sciences to help people."