

Hospital care after bad fall made her decide to pursue medicine



From top: Ms Loh Pei Yi's nine-month path to recovery after a bad fall inspired her to pursue medicine. Also among the new cohort of 168 students who will pursue a medical degree at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at Nanyang Technological University are Mr Nicholas Rachmadi and Mr Muhammad Haziq Rohani.

PHOTOS: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Two years ago, Ms Loh Pei Yi fell on her face and fractured her jaw, her front teeth piercing through her lip.

The 17-year-old NUS High School of Mathematics and Science student was rushed to Gleneagles Hospital, where doctors and nurses took care of her, explained everything carefully and reassured her.

Her path to recovery over that nine-month period made her decide to become a doctor.

Ms Loh, now 19, is part of this year's new cohort of 168 students who have signed up to pursue a medical degree at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), which held a ceremony on Wednesday for the new intake.

Medicine was not the only career option open to Ms Loh. She turned down a raft of top scholarship offers, including from the Ministry of Defence, Public Service Commission, and Defence Science and Technology Agency. These offers would have allowed her to study at the University of Cambridge or other elite institutions.

But Ms Loh's interest in becoming a doctor first took root when her father suffered a heart attack in 2011. He was then in his 40s and she was only nine.

She said: "It was frightening for me at such a young age, and it also pained me to see him being so vulnerable when he would normally be the strong one who protects the whole family."

Ms Loh said her desire to help others grew when she volunteered at Meet-the-People sessions.

One person she remembers is a Grab driver who was struggling to pay his bills because of medical problems. This made her realise that medical issues were often intertwined with social issues.

Another member of the new NTU cohort of medical students this year is Singapore Sports School alumnus Nicholas Rachmadi, who was spurred to become a doctor after seeing many of his friends fall victim to sports injuries.

One schoolmate was almost unable to walk again after a near-fatal cycling accident in 2014.

Mr Rachmadi, 19, said his roommate in school also suffered minor memory loss after a fall during a gymnastics competition before the International Baccalaureate examinations.

Mr Rachmadi, a triathlete, also tore one of his thigh muscles during training – two months before the SEA Games selection race in 2019. He said: "More than the physical pain, it was the emotional distress of not being able to train (that affected me). (I asked myself), what if I can't race, what if I can't get back to top condition?"

However, the medical team told him he could return to racing. That year, he came in first in the selection trials and bagged a silver medal for a duathlon mixed relay race at his first SEA Games held in the Philippines.

Mr Rachmadi said he 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."

Another student on his way to becoming a doctor is Mr Muhammad Haziq Rohani, 19. The Raffles Institution alumnus said that studying medicine is an opportunity for him to help better the lives of friends he has met online, from Afghanistan and Syria.

He said: "Some of them are treated like second-class citizens and treated like an afterthought... That is why I feel it can be good to use the medical sciences to help people."

Ang Qing

Education •

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