Kenneth Goh’s reason for becoming a physiotherapist might be a little more personal than most. When he was 10, his then-ancient cousin, aged eight at the time, Gtk herniated the ligament in the knee while playing football. He could not walk and had to undergo reconstructive surgery, and subsequently physiotherapy sessions.

His personal rehabilitation process marked his first encounter with physiotherapy. As he attended his regular recitals, Mr Goh noticed how the physiotherapists helped their patients get back on their feet, and he saw firsthand how patients and physiotherapists interacted. He recognized their enthusiasm and compassion, and he realized that he wanted to be a part of this community.

“I wanted to be a physiotherapist,” he recalls.

One of the biggest challenges is getting patients to adhere to their treatment plans. They often become frustrated with their lack of perceived progress and opt to stop treatment before they are fully recovered, which can be detrimental to their rehabilitation. Mr Goh talked about the importance of motivation and the role of therapists in encouraging their patients to continue with their treatment.

“Patients often become frustrated with their lack of perceived progress and opt to stop treatment before they are fully recovered, which can be detrimental to their rehabilitation,” he says. “Keeping patients motivated and engaged is crucial to their recovery.”

Mr Goh also discussed the importance of communication in therapy, emphasizing the need to listen to patients and understand their perspectives to tailor the treatment plan accordingly. He shared an anecdote about a patient who had been struggling with his recovery, and how a simple adjustment in the treatment plan led to significant improvement.

Mr Goh’s message to those interested in pursuing a career in physiotherapy is to stay curious, be patient, and be open to learning from every experience. He encourages students to seek out opportunities for mentorship and collaboration and to embrace the challenges that come with the profession.

“Stay curious, be patient, and be open to learning from every experience,” he says. “Physiotherapy is a field that requires continuous learning and adaptation.”

For students and professionals interested in pursuing a career in physiotherapy, Mr Goh recommends looking into various opportunities, such as internships, residencies, and continuing education programs. He believes that investing in ongoing education and professional development is crucial to staying current with the latest treatment modalities and research in the field.

In conclusion, Mr Goh’s story is a testament to the impact that a dedicated and compassionate physiotherapist can have on a patient’s recovery journey. His personal journey serves as an inspiration to others who may be considering a career in physiotherapy, emphasizing the importance of passion, resilience, and a commitment to patient-centered care.

BY CHEN BRITISH —

Kris Chooi Chi Yam is a big fan of Korean dramas. Not only did they inspire her to pick up the Korean language, they influenced her choice of career as well.

Currently a senior radiographer in the Healthcare Merit Award (MOHH) scholarship, Ms Chooi says she hopes to become more knowledgeable in MRI so that she can guide students or staff who want to learn the medical technique. She has already undergone training at an MRI centre in Seoul.

“After returning to Singapore, I watched the Korean medical drama, New Heart, and was fasci- nated by how the doctors could diagnose what was wrong with patients by looking at medical images,” she says.

Her interest in medical imaging was also fuelled by the idea that she could help others. “If it is something that you would like to do, because radiography is more than just pressing a button,” she says.

With the scholarship, Ms Chooi purs-ued a Bachelor of Science (Diagnostic Radiography) offered by the Singapore Institute of Technology and Swiss Col- lege of Dublin. The joint degree is con- cluded in Singapore and offers extensive clinical placement and internships during the final term.

In her current role, she performs gene- ral X-ray duties and assists in theatre operations.

“Also try to find job-shadowing oppor- tunities so you can see if it is something that you would like to do, because radiography is more than just pressing a button,” she says.
In a bid to beat cancer at its game

Dr Li Jingmei devotes herself to stopping breast cancer in its tracks

By Luke Tan

Breast cancer researcher Dr Li Jingmei loves her job as an understatement. The senior research scientist at the Agency for Science, Technology and Research’s (A*Star) Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology has studied her life’s mission to save women from this life-changing disease.

The 36-year-old says: “Breast cancer is still one of the top cancers. A third of all women eventually diagnosed in women are breast cancers. It’s also a growing problem — the number of new cases diagnosed every year has nearly tripled, while incidences of breast cancer from men largely remained the same.”

Dr Li’s current research, funded by the National Research Foundation, Singapore, and visited institutes in Sweden and Switzerland, is to identify women at high risk of breast cancer and improve screening programmes to enhance early detection.

This is crucial as currently only two-thirds of women aged 50 to 69 in Singapore have had a mammogram. Improving this figure — and more women understanding they need to follow up with biennial screenings — is a message Dr Li hopes to get more widely heard.

Seizing opportunities

Even as a young graduate holding a Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences (Biology) from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2006, Dr Li already knew she wanted to specialise in breast cancer research. In a bid to beat cancer at its game, it was like saving the world from a monster.

So the recipient of the NUS Undergraduate scholarship and Faculty of Science scholarships, applied for the A*STAR Graduate Scholarship (AGS) Overseas Graduate Scholarship to pursue her postgraduate studies in Medical Sciences at Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

She recalls: “As a young researcher, I was attracted by the strong academic network — that helped me expand my international academic network, allowing her to learn from the best minds at home and at partner universities. During my doctoral studies, I was assigned to four very different supervisors: a Chinese geneticist, a Swedish cancer oncologist, a Czech epidemiologist and an English mathematician. It was like an academic arranged marriage.”

At A*Star, the scholarship provided travel grants, seminar and conference expenses for conference participation per year which expanded her international research network very early in her career.

Dr Li says: “As the saying goes, ‘Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not.’ This scholarship gave me opportunities.”

Awards and rewards

The esteemed ‘Research Scientist’ award and commitment to furthering research in her field has garnered her numerous accolades. From the 2015 UNESCO for Women in Science International Fellowship to the 2017 Young Scientist Award as the President’s Science and Technology awards.

Her moderate zest extends to other parts of her life as well — Dr Li loves to dive and meditate. It was like finding a partner that complements her life as much as her research.

Dr Li says: “During my doctoral studies, I was assigned to four very different supervisors: a Chinese geneticist, a Swedish cancer oncologist, a Czech epidemiologist and an English mathematician. It was like an academic arranged marriage.”

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From life sciences to lifelong learning

PSC Scholarship holder Eileen Ng applies her scientific skills in her current role in MOE’s SkillsFuture Division

BY JAC WOO

A biomedical science graduate developing policies to drive lifelong learning may seem like a job mismatch, but Ms Eileen Ng, assistant director of the Ministry of Education (SkillsFuture Division), assures you that it is actually a better fit than you realise.

In her current role at MOE, Ms Ng’s team helps develop policies to drive the SkillsFuture movement by developing co-curricular activities that will matter to and improve the lives of fellow Singaporeans. “It is increasingly important that we help Singaporeans understand the importance of learning on the job,” says Ms Ng.

The 27-year-old Public Service Commission (PSC) Overseas Merit Scholarship recipient holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Biomedical Science from Imperial College London, and Master of Science in Global Health Science from the University of Oxford.

She says: “My training in scientific inquiry taught me some important mindset skills, such as using evidence and data to facilitate decision-making. “For example, when designing appropriate studies to evaluate the outcomes of policies or collect relevant data that will allow us to isolate the causes or drivers of issues. This is increasingly important with the emphasis on data-driven, evidence-based policy-making,” Ms Ng says.

MoE Ng wants to continue learning and contributing to different aspects of work in public service. “Being able to contribute towards measures that will matter to and improve the lives of fellow Singaporeans is important to me,” she says.

Ms Ng is adept at adapting her skills to suit different job roles in the public service, a skill that she believes is increasingly important with the emphasis on lifelong learning. “It is increasingly important that everyone should continue learning even after leaving school because the faster pace of technological disruptions in recent years will bring about jobs that may be very different from today’s jobs and require very different skill sets,” she says.

A firm believer in lifelong learning, Ms Ng recalls how her interest in human biology led her to pursue two degrees to deepen her understanding of the subject. She says: “My training in scientific inquiry taught me some important mindset skills, such as using evidence and data to facilitate decision-making.”

Ms Ng holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Biomedical Science from Imperial College London, and Master of Science in Global Health Science from the University of Oxford. She also completed a two-month internship at the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, Denmark.

She says: “During the internship, I witnessed some of the coordination work done at the international level to improve health standards worldwide. “It was a rare opportunity to see the behind-the-scenes work involved in helping countries level up their health practices and also to meet experts from all over the world,” she recalls.

Ms Ng wants to continue learning and contributing to different aspects of work in public service. “Being able to contribute towards measures that will matter to and improve the lives of fellow Singaporeans is important to me,” she says.
Singaporeans do not have to worry about a shortage of food thanks to people like Mr Lim Wei Jing, 26. The manager of the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority’s (AVA) Research Planning and Systems Integration Group helps to improve Singapore’s food security by developing research and development programmes for the agri-tech and food sector.

On an AVA Undergraduate Scholarship, he did a bachelor’s degree in Nutrition and Food Science (2013 to 2016) at University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom, followed by a master’s degree in Food Security (2016 to 2017) at University of Edinburgh, UK, also supported by AVA.

Why did you sign up for AVA’s scholarship?
I am passionate about the environment and sustainability, and I love food. I saw myself applying the knowledge from university to AVA’s work — to ensure a resilient supply of safe food for Singapore.

What was your most memorable experience in university?
During the summer holidays of 2017, I took part in a programme organised by Challenges Worldwide, a Scottish international development charity, and spent six weeks in Kampala, Uganda. The agricultural nation is dominated by smallholder farmers, many of whom see organic agriculture as a way to increase the value of their produce. I was there gathering data for my dissertation on food loss and waste in Uganda’s organic fruit supply chain. I saw how the farmers organised many initiatives to tackle a system that’s unable to provide adequate infrastructure and financial support to them.

It was a meaningful experience.

How did your scholarship enhance your experience at university?
Knowing that I was returning to Singapore to serve my bond helped to clarify my goals. I focused on modules that would help me better understand AVA’s work, for example.

What are some of your recent work projects?
A project last year was to develop a research and development programme for the agri-tech and food sector. It is a key factor that will enable our farms to increase food production significantly.

What do you hope to achieve in the future?
Climate change is likely to have a significant impact on agriculture. We can do a lot more to ensure that our food supply becomes climate-resilient and that our local food producers develop in a sustainable manner.

AVA Undergraduate Scholarship

CRITERIA:

Applications open in February and close two weeks after the release of A-level results.

Singapore citizens and permanent residents are eligible. However, it is subject to the discretion of the authority to confirm.

VALUE OF AWARDS:

Tuition fees and other scholarships as determined by the Ministry of Education.

Pre-degree allowance (non-local students only)

Return economy class airfare (for overseas students)

NOTE:

Four-year local study

Six-year overseas study

Terms and conditions apply.

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