



Khoo Teck Puat Hospital senior staff nurse Bindeeya Chandran earned a first-class degree while working on the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic and caring for her three-year-old son. PHOTO: KHOO TECK PUAT HOSPITAL



Senior staff nurse Carie Ong, who works in the National University Hospital's intensive care unit, said wearing personal protective equipment all day made studying harder as she was often dehydrated. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Nurses get 1st-class degrees while fighting pandemic

Fang Yiyang
and Ng Wei Kai

Getting a first-class degree from King's College London would be an achievement for anybody, but Ms Bindeeya Chandran, 33, did it while also balancing motherhood and working on the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The senior staff nurse at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital was one of 70 students here who completed part-time nursing degree courses with the college in January and March this year.

"The toughest part was when our dissertations coincided with the conversion of our ward (between January and April last year) to take in Covid-19 patients who were more ill and needed close monitoring," she said. "The workload was heavy and the virus was still new to us at that time."

More than 40 per cent of the students passed with first-class honours, the highest possible grade.

The nursing courses were offered in partnership with Singapore's Ngee Ann Academy, a private education institution.

Ms Chandran was motivated to upgrade her nursing diploma to a degree to better help the palliative care patients she often cares for.

"The module we had on palliative (end-of-life) care taught me how to treat them more holistically and about the importance of communication to help patients and families feel safe and comfortable," she said.

The module also drew others like National University Hospital senior staff nurse Carie Ong, 27, to the degree programme.

"I was initially uncertain about being able to cope with a part-time degree while working full-time as a nurse in the intensive care unit (ICU), but I was motivated to learn more about end-of-life care, as it's relevant to my job," she said.

When the pandemic broke out, being in the ICU meant that Ms Ong had to don personal protective equipment for most of the day,

which made studying after work even harder than before.

She said: "We were often dehydrated and exhausted by the end of our shift."

Senior staff nurse at KK Women's and Children's Hospital Nurulhuda Abd Majid, 31, said her time-management skills and clear work-life boundaries helped her achieve her first-class degree.

She said: "Studying part-time while working full-time requires tons of discipline... I planned my timetable so that my days off were either entirely dedicated to studying or family."

For Ms Chandran, it was the knowledge that her three-year-old son was watching that helped her stay the course. "He helped me to stay focused on my goal because I wanted to show him that anything is possible if you set your mind to it," she said. "No matter how hard it gets, nothing can stop you from achieving your goals in life."

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KK Women's and Children's Hospital senior staff nurse Nurulhuda Abd Majid said good time management and clear work-life boundaries helped her stay disciplined while she studied part-time. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO