

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP

BREATHING NEW LIFE



Breathing and respiration are amongst the most vital mechanisms to life. Hear what Alodie Lim, a Healthcare Scholar with the National Healthcare Group (NHG), has to share about her role in treating patients with respiratory difficulties.



By Jules Low

Respiratory therapists specialise in providing respiratory care services to patients who have cardio-pulmonary deficiencies. As experts in advanced airway management, respiratory therapists also manage life support for patients in the Intensive Care Units (ICU) and General Wards.

26-year-old Alodie Lim, a Senior Respiratory Therapist, tells us about her determination to give her best to improve the lives and health of her patients.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A SENIOR RESPIRATORY THERAPIST? WHICH ASPECTS OF PATIENT CARE ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

Alodie Lim: I am involved in the assessment, treatment and management of patients with cardio-respiratory diseases and related disorders, especially those patients on

ventilators (also known as life support machines) in the ICUs. In addition, I make ward rounds with the medical team to review and discuss appropriate respiratory therapies for the patients. We have a lot of patients that have different breathing difficulties. They range from common conditions such as asthma to more serious cardiac or even neurological issues. As a result, I have to conduct my assessments with great care and prudence in order to ensure my patients get the best treatment possible.

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN HEALTHCARE AND RESPIRATORY THERAPY IN PARTICULAR? WHAT WAS THE MAIN DRAW FOR YOU?

Alodie: I have always wanted to make a difference and have a positive impact on the lives of others. After a long period of deliberation, I realised that becoming a healthcare professional was the best way to do so and fulfil my lifelong ambition. I chose to go into respiratory therapy because it was a new field and I wanted to do something different from the norm. In my job, I also get to learn from doctors, nurses and therapists about the various facets of healthcare.

It is a fun and dynamic learning process every day and I enjoy it immensely. For instance, I see many patients every day and each one of them requires a different form of treatment, providing me with a variety of learning experiences and great exposure. It is an exciting career and I eagerly look forward to shaping the future of our profession in Singapore.

SHARE WITH US SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUR SCHOLARSHIP JOURNEY.

Alodie: Attending The Ohio State University (OSU) allowed me to learn from the very best professionals in the field. They were full of passion and this further ignited my desire to help others back home with my new skills. I am also grateful for the company of like-minded friends – we supported each other in our studies and ambitions and really grew together. In fact, 100 per cent of my batch mates became board-certified registered respiratory therapists under the National Board of Respiratory Care (US), and this occurred even before we graduated! This led to my school consistently having the best performance among all universities that offered respiratory therapy in the US.

My scholarship journey has also been filled with many unforgettable moments that I will cherish for life. I visited many US cities and states, and also crossed the border to Canada, but my favourite has got to be hiking and camping at the Smokey Mountains in North Carolina. I love nature, and the scenery was gorgeous! We could see so many stars at night too!

I am currently part of Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) Management Executive Programme, where I have been given invaluable exposure to hospital operations and been involved in hospital-wide projects. To add on, there are multiple opportunities for me to travel and gain fresh perspectives. For instance, I travelled to Las Vegas, US, last December to attend the American Association of Respiratory Care Congress. And this February, I will be going to Hong Kong to visit a few hospitals as well as the Health Authority to learn more about the healthcare system there. As you can tell, it has been a hectic few months but I have absolutely relished every moment.

HOW HAS YOUR SCHOLARSHIP PREPARED YOU TO DO WELL IN YOUR CURRENT JOB?

Alodie: Besides equipping me with technical skills, I think I have definitely shown a lot of improvement in my 'soft' skills, especially in the area of effective communication. My global exposure at OSU has allowed me to broaden my horizons. I engaged and interacted with people from different walks of life and through the many conversations that I had, I discovered a greater sense of being compassionate and understanding towards others.

This has helped me greatly when I communicate with my patients. It was challenging at first, but slowly but surely I began to see the differences that I made in each of their lives. Being able to see them recover with big smiles on their faces reaffirms my commitment to helping others get better. Together with supportive colleagues and mentors, I believe that I am in the right environment to achieve my goals and dreams.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ASPIRING HEALTHCARE SCHOLARS? WHAT CAN THEY LOOK FORWARD TO?

Alodie: One important piece of advice would be to sign up for job shadowing in a healthcare setting before deciding to take up the scholarship. While becoming a scholar is a privilege, not many people realise that it is also a huge commitment. The healthcare sector is very broad and there are many different career pathways within it. I advise prospective scholars to learn more about each profession before deciding which healthcare career suits them best. Nevertheless, the one thing that should draw you into this career at the end of the day is the passion to make a difference in peoples' lives.

Future scholars can look forward to many opportunities as the healthcare sector is a thriving industry. There will thus be many paths for them to explore. They will also have the opportunity to apply to study at an overseas university. I had an amazing experience overseas so I strongly recommend it. Last but not least, a fulfilling career awaits you and it's up to you to make the most out of all these opportunities! ■

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Alodie Lim Poh Hia
Healthcare Scholar

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