

# More incentive to switch to healthcare job

New degrees, higher training allowances part of bid to draw mid-career people

**Melissa Lin**

With Singapore's increasing need for healthcare workers as the population ages, the Government is making it more attractive for those thinking of a mid-career switch into the sector.

It is offering bigger training allowances and new degree options for those looking at becoming nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or radiographers.

The Ministry of Health and Singapore Workforce Development Agency yesterday announced that they will be increasing the monthly training allowance for their five healthcare professional conversion programmes (PCPs) – which help individuals get the necessary qualifications and skills.

From April, the allowances will be raised by between \$50 and \$150. Allowances now range from \$1,300 to \$1,900, and will go up to between \$1,350 and \$2,050.

This is the second round of enhancements to the PCP following the increase in monthly training allowance and introduction of a career transition bonus in 2014.

Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for Health and the Environment and Water Resources, said the changes "are aimed at enabling more mid-career professionals to join the healthcare family".

"The healthcare sector is a sunrise sector amid the uncertain economic outlook. We expect demand for healthcare to increase with an ageing population," she said yesterday, on the sidelines of a healthcare career preview for mid-career professionals at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

From September, mid-career professionals can also apply for SIT's new full-time four-year degree programmes in physiotherapy, occupational therapy and diagnostic radiography.

Trainees selected for the degree programmes will receive allowances of \$2,100 to \$2,420 each month, depending on their prior work experience, and a one-time bonus of \$2,000 upon graduation.

These programmes will replace



PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Nanyang Polytechnic's three-year diploma programmes for the same areas of study, which took in their last batch of students last April.

Since 2003, more than 1,000 mid-career people have made the switch to the healthcare sector.

Senior IT consultant Sebastian Quek, who was at the fair, said he was keen on becoming either an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. "I hope to enhance the lives of patients. Besides, healthcare is a fast-growing industry and is more stable," said the 40-year-old. He was retrenched two years ago from a job in the banking sector and took five months before he found his current job.

On the new degree offered by SIT, Mr Quek said: "A degree offers better prospects compared to a diploma, and the salary will be more competitive."

Ms Grace Yeap, who is in her 40s, was a teacher who embarked on a diploma in diagnostic radiography under the PCP five years ago. The radiographer with the National Healthcare Group said: "It is very fulfilling knowing at the end of every day that I helped somebody."

Another preview will be held from 8.30am to 1pm on Saturday at SIT's Dover campus.

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**HEALTHY PROSPECTS**

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**DRAMY KHOR** (right), Senior Minister of State for Health and the Environment and Water Resources, who was at a healthcare career preview for mid-career professionals at SIT yesterday.