

The caring nurses of UCSI

> Professional pride is instilled in its students

NURSES make a difference. From helping you welcome new life to easing the pain of saying goodbye to a loved one, nurses give much of themselves every day.

The annual International Nurses Day celebration on May 12—Florence

Nightingale's birthday—is a fitting tribute to their continuous sacrifice.

Soaking in the highs and lows of human emotion is taxing. So what drives nurses to do what they do?

For many, it is the pride they derive from the profession.

"I have been in nursing for

more than 30 years and I am still going strong," said Assoc Prof Jeya Devi Coomarasamy, head of UCSI University's School of Nursing.

"The profession is an extremely noble one as we go beyond what is expected in order to make a difference in the lives of others. The satisfaction is priceless and it keeps me going."

At UCSI's School of Nursing, this sense of professional pride is instilled in all its students. Among them are Rachel Anthony Stephen, who is currently a palliative care nurse with Hospis Malaysia, and Hepzibha Alexander, a cardiac nurse in the US, who is preparing to pursue medicine.

As a palliative care nurse, Stephen's patients are those with life-limiting illness—serious conditions that may lead to the patients' passing.

Thus, not many people can see themselves in palliative care as they would feel sad when the patients they have taken care of—for days, weeks or even years—die.

But for Stephen, 26, knowing that her care has made her patients comfortable and that they are not suffering, gives joy.

As part of her role, she is also there for the family to prepare them for the care that needs to be given.

With a wide grin, Stephen noted that many people who knew her were surprised that she decided to study nursing.

"I like to sing, I like to dance, and I like to talk," she laughed, revealing how her family members had thought her choice would be the media industry.

Knowing what she wanted to do, she signed up for her Diploma in Nursing at UCSI's School of Nursing. It was also thanks to UCSI that Stephen was introduced to palliative care and Hospis Malaysia. A firm supporter of palliative care, the school has raised more than RM16,000 for Hospis Malaysia through fundraising campaigns.

This mutual respect sees the CEO of Hospis Malaysia, Dr Ednin Hamzah periodically dropping by UCSI to deliver talks about palliative care.

Attending one of these talks as an undergraduate made Stephen realise that palliative care was her passion, and that Hospis Malaysia was where she wanted to launch her career. Five years later, she has found personal and professional satisfaction in her career here.

Hepzibha Alexander's story is another inspiring one. As a cardiac nurse in the Telemetry and Intermediate Care units, Alexander is used to heart-pumping life and death situations.

But what really stands out for her, is her first "code" situation—a situation where a patient requires resuscitation or immediate medical attention.

"My patient was a young man in his 20s who suddenly developed chest pains. Within minutes, he collapsed and had a cardiac arrest," she said.

Moving quickly, Alexander and her team performed CPR

and were able to resuscitate him. Throughout the night, Alexander took care of the patient and updated his family about his status.

The next day, the patient underwent an automated implantable cardioverter-defibrillator insertion (AICD). The AICD is a small battery-powered electrical impulse generator implanted in patients who are at a risk of sudden cardiac arrest.

"A few days later, I saw him leave the hospital, alive and well," she said, adding that it was a very rewarding experience for her.

Currently based in Washington, Alexander got her first brush with nursing as a child.

Her family offered humanitarian aid to isolated villages in South India and she saw the key roles nurses played from delivering immunisation shots to vision check-ups.

The nobility of the profession spoke volumes and nursing has been her calling ever since.

When she first arrived in Kuala Lumpur and was looking for a nursing degree, she was introduced to UCSI's Bachelor of Nursing (Hons).

Going through the curriculum, she found it to be very interactive, with various teaching methods, including presentations, group projects, research opportunities, problem-based teaching and evidence-based learning.

Most importantly, the inclusion of clinicals every semester excited her.

During her time at UCSI, Alexander and her classmates were given the opportunity to serve patients of various ages and specialisation in different clinical settings, such as rural, outpatient, private and public.

The experience prepared her for a career as a registered

nurse in the US.

Perhaps, it even played a role in saving her first code patient's life.

UCSI University's School of Nursing would like to wish all nurses a belated Happy International Nurses Day! In

line with this year's theme, *Nurses: A Force for Change – A Vital Resource for Health*, the school supports that well-trained and highly-motivated nurses are essential for the health of the world's population.

To find out more about the

School of Nursing or its new programmes, the Advanced Diploma in Palliative Care for Healthcare Professionals and Advanced Diploma in Healthcare Informatics, drop by the university's KL Campus (South Wing) from 9am to 6pm

on weekdays, and 9am to 5pm on weekends.

For more details, email www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry

Stephen finds
her role as
palliative care
nurse most
rewarding.

