

# Hands-on approach to pharmacy

UCSI students have a clear advantage when it comes to studying pharmacy. Its education focuses on introducing them to the profession as soon as possible through impactful hands-on learning.

The highlight of this approach is the UCSI Annual Public Health Campaign.

It sees pharmacy students conducting free health checks under the close supervision of lecturers who are experienced pharmacists themselves.

The campaign has been spearheaded by students for the past 13 years.

Their responsibilities range from planning, which includes getting sponsors on board to fund this free community campaign, to conducting actual health checks, body mass index (BMI) measurement and blood pressure tests.

UCSI's pharmacy student have served approximately 10,000 members of the public by bringing the campaign to various states, including Malacca, Selangor, Johor and Kuantan.

"The soft skills I learnt, such as speaking confidently and professionally to sponsors and the public even when I am nervous, helped me in my job now. I find it easy to communicate with patients and medical suppliers," said P'ng Xiu Wen.

P'ng is currently completing her provisionally registered pharmacist stint in a government hospital.

She was a student counsellor during the 10th and 11th UCSI Annual Public Health Campaigns.



P'ng feeding a rat with extracts from the Sabah Snake Grass to analyse the toxicity of this popular herb believed to treat cancer as her supervisor Assoc Prof Dr Chin looks on.

Through such hands-on activities, the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences hopes the students develop a sense of familiarity and responsibility for community service.

Assoc Prof Dr Yeong Siew Wei knows that the profession is deeply intertwined with the health of the community.

A registered pharmacist herself for more than 17 years in pharmacy and the academia, she said, "We want our students to engage with the community early to prepare them to face the challenges of their future careers."

All pharmacy students must serve a year of internship with the Health

Ministry before serving another year of compulsory service as a provisionally recognised pharmacist at a posting selected by the Ministry.

Early exposure to community pharmacy work will further the students' careers in the future, explains Yeong.

## Track record of excellence

The faculty has a track record of more than 14 years in offering an undergraduate pharmacy programme.

It is one of the earliest private tertiary education institutions to offer a pharmacy programme that can fully be completed locally.

It also has the distinction of being among the few institutions with full accreditation by the Malaysian Pharmacy Board.

It has graduated approximately 800 pharmacists – 100% of whom have found employment within six months of graduation.

The faculty has also given equal emphasis to pharmaceutical research. This is not limited to the staff members but is also something the students have excelled in.

P'ng has also published three research papers in internationally refereed journals – while she was still a student.

For these, she has worked with head of the Postgraduate and Research Department Assoc Prof Dr Chin Jin Han and head of the Pharmaceutical Chemistry Department Assoc Prof Dr Gabriel Akowuah for her research.

Her research papers were

published in *Journal of Acute Diseases*, *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research*, and *Journal of Applied Pharmacy*.

Uniquely, the faculty champions both lab-based and clinical-based research. P'ng's classmate, Chan Mei Fong @ Shobana, chose the latter.

Chan's research involved studying the usage of herbal medicine among female breast cancer patients during their treatment and follow-up period.

For Chan, her choice of clinical-based research stemmed from her interest in patient care and her childhood ambition of improving community health.

She worked with Dr Yeong and her research results were then incorporated in an easy-to-read poster and presented in the 11th Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society Pharmacy Scientific Conference in 2012.

Whether it is training pharmacists who will go above and beyond the call of duty for their patients or advancing pharmacy through research, UCSI's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences will continue its track record of excellence.

To know more about pharmacists, drop by the UCSI Special Career Info Day on Aug 9 and 10 at the KL Campus (South Wing).

■ For more information, e-mail [www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry](mailto:www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry) or contact 03-9101 8882.