

# Advancing nutrition

WE eat for many reasons – out of hunger or for pleasure, flavour, comfort and nutrition – but have you considered the impact your eating habits have on your body?

According to the head of UCSI University's (UCSI) nutrition with wellness programme, Assoc Prof Dr Yim Hip Seng, the human body is similar to a racing car.

"Putting in the wrong fuel or running it without maintenance will prevent it from giving its full performance. Without healthy eating, your body will suffer just like a car engine," he says.

Findings from British medical journal *The Lancet* showed that Malaysia has one of the highest rates of obesity among Asian countries with 45.3% of its population being obese. The number of diabetes patients jumped to 31% this year from 15.2% in 2011.

On the other end of the spectrum, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia are on the rise due to the growing influence of the media and today's celebrity-centric culture.

All this leads to the increasing need for nutritionists who are qualified to give advice on disease prevention and promote holistic well-being of individuals and communities.

A nutritionist has various roles to play, including being a scientist in the public health and clinical settings as well as in the fields of sports nutrition, health promotion and education.

To groom qualified and well-rounded nutritionists, UCSI has launched the BSc (Hons) Nutrition with Wellness programme.

Unlike other programmes on nutrition, this degree has a dual focus on the scientific understanding of nutrition and food science as well as fundamentals of marketing and entrepreneurship.

The degree is the latest in a string of successful programmes from UCSI, which is the first private university in Malaysia to offer a food science with nutrition BSc degree.

The dual focus of the BSc (Hons) Nutrition with Wellness will give students an added edge in the competitive working world.

"The programme enables graduates to venture into traditional nutritionist roles

such as health consultants for disease prevention, public health and education or into the booming wellness business," says Assoc Prof Yim.

When it comes to fields related to human health, research and innovation is crucial to ensure continuous advancement for mankind.

Innovation and research are two things UCSI's Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) is well known for.

To maintain the highest level of academic and scientific standards, the faculty emphasises evidence-based learning and takes pride in having state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment.

Students will also learn from the programme's experienced academicians such as Prof Dr Mirmalini Kandiah, one of the first three nutrition officers of the Health Ministry during the late 1970s.

She is currently one of the respected researchers specialising in the fields of cardio-metabolic risk and herbal remedies for cancer patients.

In line with the university's Praxis approach, which advocates the application of theory to practice, the programme also includes two months of co-operative placement for every year of study.

This offers students the opportunity to pursue an internship with some of the most prestigious names in the industry.

Further adding to the programme's credibility is the prestige of the university. UCSI was ranked SETARA Tier 5: Excellent in the SETARA 2013 ranking by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

It is also among the Top 300 in the 2015 QS Asian University Rankings.

This is due to its increasing research output, internationalisation and collaborations with renowned universities such as Harvard University, Imperial College London and many others.

"Passion and enthusiasm in improving human health are important in a student, as are good communication skills.

There are also

multiple health awareness projects where nutritionists are required to work with the community so always be ready to venture out of your comfort zone," says Assoc Prof Yim.

To ensure students improve their communication skills, the final year of the programme involves students embarking on a community project.

This involves them working with a community, be it a school or a residential area, and advising members of the public on nutrition and wellness.

Assoc Prof Yim explains that curiosity is another essential trait.

"Work can be challenging and sometimes, it takes months to see the results. But being curious will warrant you new discoveries and the experience is always fulfilling."

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



Assoc Prof Dr  
Yim Hip Seng  
of UCSI  
University  
explains how  
the role of a  
nutritionist  
has changed  
over time.