They switch careers and start journey to be doctors

Ex-VP of bank and former journalist among this year’s intake of future clinicians at Duke-NUS Medical School

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One worked in a bank. Another was a former journalist. And now, they are studying to become doctors.

They are two of the 81 students in this year’s intake of future clinicians at Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore’s only graduate medical school.

Mr Lim Chun Chai, 39, a father of two, was a vice-president at OCBC Bank for nine years. He was responsible for processing and documenting corporate loans.

Ms Hoe Pei Shan, 31, is a former journalist at The New Paper, The Straits Times and The Business Times.

If they complete their four-year graduate programme, they will be awarded a medical degree in 2023. Before enrolling at Duke-NUS, both Mr Lim and Ms Hoe took the Medical College Admission Test administered by the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Mr Lim told TNP in a phone interview last week that despite being the school’s most mature student, he believes age is not a barrier.

He said his life and working experience would benefit him in his studies.

He said: “Doctors need plenty of non-academic qualities in their profession like being empathetic and resilient. I believe these qualities are transferable from my life to the medical field.”

But Mr Lim was worried about how much time he would have to spend with his family.

He said: “It is only the first week of school but there is a lot of study material. Especially because I have two young children – I’ll try my best to make time for my family.”

Financially, Mr Lim hoped to live simply for the next four years to cope with being a full-time student.

He hopes to specialise in geriatric medicine and palliative care after medical school.

With an increasing ageing population, Mr Lim hopes to contribute to the healthcare system in Singapore.

Ms Hoe was a journalist for six years.

As a former gymnast and volunteer at the Singapore Red Cross (SRC), she has been exposed to and developed interests in both sports and disaster medicine.

The literature graduate from New York University went on to pursue a master’s in journalism at Columbia University.

She hopes to specialise in emergency medicine after medical school.

She said: “Disaster medicine treats patients during or after natural or man-made disasters like earthquakes or bombings.

“I am still a youth member of SRC and fully intend to volunteer for missions around the world as a doctor upon graduation.”

Last Friday, wearing their white coats, Mr Lim and Ms Hoe recited the Hippocratic Oath at the white coat ceremony at SingHealth’s Academia Auditorium.

The oath is taken by those in the healing profession to uphold ethics to the highest standards and do no harm.

Mr Lim and Ms Hoe will be the 131th batch of medical students since the establishment of Duke-NUS in 2005.

Ms Hoe said she was looking forward to her studies and her graduation.

She added: “I am most eager to serve real patients and deepen my learning process. The beauty of medicine lies in how it is a continuous life-long learning discipline.”

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