The first step to serving humanity

GREEK physician and father of modern medicine, Hippocrates, said: "Wherever the art of Medicine is loved, there is also a love of Humanity."

That is what first-year medical students at Newcastle University Medicine Malaysian (NUMed) Jerry Tan and Izham Halid discovered on their journey through medicine.

Like students around the world starting university education, Tan and Izham were unsure of what to expect.

But from the structure of the course to the social activities, both have settled in well and enjoyed their first step towards becoming a doctor.

"My first year at NUMed has been amazing," said Tan.

"There is a lot of work but I expected this as becoming a doctor requires commitment."

The course structure keeps the work interesting and Tan found that rewarding.

All of NUMed's courses offer a carefully structured combination of hands-on practical skills and laboratory sessions, lectures and demonstrations in state-of-the-art lecture theatres, and small group work in seminar-style classrooms.

There is a real focus on delivering a rounded education and this means developing key technical, practical and communication skills the students require to get to the top in their future careers, as well as acquiring the essential scientific knowledge that underpins medicine.

"The hands-on approach is helpful for example, recently in our Patient Doctor Society elective we were learning about pregnancy and so I went and visited a pregnant woman to talk to her," Tan continued.

"This form of integrated active learning is helpful — we even have a resident simulated patient called Sven that allows students to practice techniques, including clearing a patient's airway or inserting an intravenous drip line into a vein, as well as treat emergencies such as heart attacks or septic shock."

Active learning and simulated patients, like Sven, are a central part of the Medicine (MBBS) course at NUMed and at Newcastle University, UK.

NUMed students enjoy identical training standards and curriculum to those at Newcastle University, UK. Certain aspects have simply been contextualised to Malaysian culture and circumstances.

This has the additional benefit of allowing students to adapt quickly should they choose to spend a period of study in the UK, an option open for everyone.

Similarities between the UK and Malaysia campuses are useful for medical students as NUMed became the first university outside of the UK to receive recognition by the General Medical Council (GMC) — the statutory body that registers and regulates doctors in the UK.

This was an important milestone for NUMed as it means Malaysians who study medicine at NUMed and carry out their postgraduate clinical training programme in selected Malaysian hospitals can now apply for full registration as doctors with the GMC as well as the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC).

"Away from my studies, I have had a fantastic first year at NUMed," commented Izham Halid.

“This is down to the great friends I made in my first year who come from all walks of campus life; my courses, study groups, balls and the many events that the Student Association organises.

“The highlight of the year was the NUMed Ball, which was held at the DoubleTree by Hilton.

"It was a fun way to end the year and mix with students from across the years."

The ball was open to all the NUMed students and the turnout was impressive.

The NUMed Ball is one of numerous events run by 20 student societies, clubs and organisations.

NUMed is well known for its diverse student population, which is reflected by the wide range of ethnic and social societies available. Event highlights include the NUMed Games, the Winter Ball, a Deepavali night and a talent night.

All of these activities have provided the students with exposure to a mix of cultures as well as the opportunity to socialise across different cultures.

"My favourite society is the musical society, we play every Thursday and even some of the lecturers join in," Izham added.

The Student Association actively encourages students to form friendships, and as such a "peer-pairing" system is operated at NUMed whereby every new student is attached to a "family" of senior students who provide an instant social network.

They are also available to offer advice and guidance as an alternative to the pastoral support provided by the students' personal tutor, allowing all students the best start on their journey to becoming doctors.

For more information, look out for the advertisement in this StarSpecial.