Excellent path

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

That is what first year medical students from Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed) Jerry Tan and Ijham Halid discovered in their journey studying medicine. The most students entering university Tan and Ijham were unsure of what to expect. However, NUMed's structure or course and the social activities have eased both of a settled and enjoyable first step towards becoming a doctor.

"There is a lot of work but I expected this as becoming a doctor requires commitment," said Tan. "The course structure keeps the work interesting and I find it extremely 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-friendly classrooms. The focus is on delivering a rounded education, by developing key technical, practical and communication skills that students require to get to the top in their field. They also acquire essential scientific knowledge that underpins medicine.

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

He said this form of integrated active learning is beneficial. "We have a resident simulated patient called Sven who allows students to practice techniques that include clearing a patient's airway or inserting an intravenous drip line into a vein, as well as treat emergencies such as heart attack 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 and lead to the award of the same degree.

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 also useful for medical students - 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 to 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," said Ijham Halid. "This is down to the friends I have made in my first year (who) come from all walks of life: my courses, study groups, halls and the many events that the Student Association organizes.

Ijham said the highlight of the year was the NUMed ball that was held at the Doubletree by Hilton. The ball was open to NUMed students and was one of numerous events run by 20 student societies, clubs and organisations at the university. 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 an opportunity to socialise across different cohorts.

My favourite society is the martial society, we play every Thursday and even some of the lectures join in," added Ijham.

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

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

Newcastle University UK's established international branch campus in Johor, Malaysia provides undergraduate degrees in Medicine (MB BS) and the biomedical sciences (BSc). A one-year Foundation Certificate in Biological and Biomedical Sciences is also available, the successful completion of which will lead to progression to the MB BS or BSc (Hons) Biomedical Sciences programmes.

Studying at NUMed Malaysia allows students to obtain a reputable UK qualification from an internationally recognized university at a cost much less than studying in the UK.

For more information, look out for the advertisement in this month's issues!