The making of a doctor

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The Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia Open Day 2018 will be held on March 17 and 18 (10am-4pm). Here is your chance to find out from NUMed Malaysia staff and students about courses and university life.

AS A MEMBER of the highly coveted 1% of the world’s best universities, and ranking 16th in the United Kingdom for excellence in research, Newcastle University is indeed a leader in education.

The Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed Malaysia) is an anchor tenant of EduCity, an education hub with world class universities and learning facilities in the southern Malaysian state of

Johor. NUMed Malaysia is an attractive choice thanks to its global reputation for academic excellence, as it draws and builds upon a rich legacy as a medical school in the UK dating back to 1834.

As a fully-owned international branch campus since 2009, NUMed Malaysia has produced over 100 graduates.

"The most unique thing is that this is the first medical programme that is recognised and accredited by the UK General Medical Council outside the UK," explains Dean of Biomedical Science Prof Christopher Baldwin.

"We adhere to the same stringent standards as our campus back in the UK and the council conducts regular visits and inspections to ensure that every graduate is of the same calibre, or higher."

"We’re very proud and pleased about the recognition for and reputation of our students. They receive the same education, however for much lower fees, about two-thirds of what students pay in the UK."

Right from the start

Prof Baldwin emphasises that Newcastle's breed of medical graduates are set apart because they get it right from the very first step, which is the university entry interview where he makes it a point of ensuring a student understands exactly what to expect.

"Students can enrol in a medical degree with naïve expectations. But we want them to know from the start, the rigours of this career they have chosen to embark on, and how crucial it is for them to be independent in learning, researching, understanding and applying immediately what they gain over the course of countless hours and labour.

"And sometimes, despite the very best efforts, facilities, training and medicine, you do lose a patient, you cannot save every life, how then should you carry on? A medical school helps provide a student with the best possible foundation to start off strong and on the right path."

"From the first year, a medical student is exposed to a wide variety of skills that cover very crucial areas of communicating among each other and with patients and their families. They get to ask a lot of questions in delving into patient history alongside skills and knowledge. They will be constantly rotated to six or seven different hospitals around the state. By the third year, they would have quite decided on their specialisation.

"The learning curve for them is very sharp."
After a one-year foundation, a medical student goes on to five years to obtain a degree followed by several more years if he/she chooses to specialise.

"But a true doctor never stops learning," says Prof Baldwin. "They are exposed to different medical conditions and cases, we talk a lot about patient history, immunology in a context, we run through a lot of patient contact as these students know the heart of everything they do is about patients."

A huge benefit is that students can complete their degree in Malaysia, or opt to go to the UK for six to eight weeks where they need to cover only their flight and living expenses. Some continue to work on research projects or their Masters, and they pay UK students' fees, not the hefty international students' rates.

First in its field: NUMed Malaysia's medical programme is the first to be recognised and accredited by the UK General Medical Council outside the UK.

Career choice

For Prof Baldwin, the science and medical field offers relentless challenges.

A student has to therefore be certain that this is a career that they would be passionate about and dedicated to for life. But as a fresh school leaver at 17 or 18, can they be certain of their chosen vocation?

"The entry interviews always help me gauge a student’s motivation for taking up medicine or biomedical science, which provides an alternative for research, as what I have done," says Prof Baldwin.

"Newcastle is a premier university in the UK and our medical education is on the forefront of
research and development," he explains. "All of our staff members have PhD or a medical degree and they are trained also in education.

"A medical student who graduates and eventually becomes a doctor is on a lifetime of learning. Their education doesn’t end when they leave our doors to go on to their housemanship. With new treatments, new challenges, they have to adapt and keep on learning and to be contributive."

Newcastle University has long been guided by principles of interdisciplinary partnership and innovation with much of its research focused on addressing a global society’s biggest challenges such as ageing, energy production, social justice and urban development.

The university has been granted the world’s first ever licence to offer a fertility treatment to mothers affected by mitochondrial diseases, which are genetic conditions causing symptoms from muscle weakness, blindness and deafness to diabetes, heart and liver diseases.

NUMed Malaysia offers a Foundation Certificate in Biological and Biomedical Sciences programme as an ideal stepping stone for school-leavers seeking to explore a career dedicated to research, learning and development.

"It is intended to serve as a pre-undergraduate Foundation programme for Malaysian and international students intending to study medicine, biological or biomedical sciences.

"A typical 17- or 18-year-old student would gain invaluable intellectual development through this foundation programme as well as subject knowledge to prepare them to become academically capable of studying at a degree level in the following year.

"Students are also equipped with English language competency and confidence as well as a practical experience of British University methods," said Prof Baldwin.

This article is brought to you by Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia. For more details on NUMed Malaysia Open Day 2018 (March 17–18), go to http://www.ncl.ac.uk/numed/about/news/item/openday2018.html.