

# Let's get physio

Former IT worker seeks dream job in healthcare despite 50% pay cut

**LIN YANQIN**

yanqin@mediacorp.com.sg

ABOUT five years after he volunteered to help the elderly, Mr Chioh Chai Kuei (picture) thought about getting a full-time job in the healthcare industry.

It wasn't an easy decision as it meant having to take a 50-per-cent pay cut. But passion won out in the end and he left the information technology field to take on a job as a nursing home administrator.

"It took me months to decide," said Mr Chioh, 46, who is single and lives with his parents. "Ultimately, it's about passion and what you want to contribute with your life. I don't mind a simple life if it's fulfilling."

With a diploma in computer science, Mr Chioh's interest in the healthcare industry was first ignited in 1994 when a friend approached him to volunteer at a nursing home. It ultimately led him to his dream job as a physiotherapy assistant in the Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hwa Kwan (AMK-THK) Hospital, where he has been working since 2006.

Mr Chioh, who was previously an IT systems developer, said: "At that time, I felt that something was missing in my life. When my friend suggested volunteering, I felt it could be what I was searching for."

At the very least, he needed a change in working environment: All that staring at computer screens had led to strained vision and regular bouts of headaches. But his options in the healthcare industry were limited.

"I don't have an A-level certification and it's not easy to find the time and money to go back to school and get my diploma or go to a university overseas," he said.

Since taking on the administrator role in 1999, working daily with the elderly spurred him to learn more about physiotherapy so he can help some of them "get back on their feet to be with their families again".

Mr Chioh said: "From interacting with



**on the go**  
DOW WONG  
Physiotherapy assistant

machines all day, I started interacting with real people."

On his own, he sought out opportunities to learn more about traditional Chinese medicine and took courses in foot reflexology and massage therapy.

Finally, in 2006, his dream job came along. A friend informed him that AMK-THK Hospital was looking for a physiotherapy assistant. "It was exactly what I wanted to do and I decided to go for it," he said.

He had to undergo a course in physiotherapy at the Institute of Technical Education but his previous experience in the nursing home stood him in good stead and he breezed through the course. His familiarity with some of the concepts of physiology and anatomy also helped him ease into his new job.

His daily duties involve taking the elderly through rehabilitative exercises, which sometimes requires much patience.

While his new job is hardly a bed of roses, Mr Chioh, who still earns less than what he used to, is loving every minute of it.

He recently won a Healthcare Humanity Award given out by the Courage Fund and still volunteers regularly. "The elderly need respect because they contributed to the growth of the country ... I try my best to communicate and care for patients the way I would want my parents to be treated," he said.

*If you have a question for Mr Chioh about making the switch to become a physiotherapist, email [succeed@newstoday.com.sg](mailto:succeed@newstoday.com.sg) and we will carry his reply in Quiz Time next week.*