

News



PICTURE: IMH

**CARING FOR A PATIENT:** Mr Christopher Kan is one of 118 winners in this year's NTUC May Day CBF (Cheaper, Better, Faster) Model Partnership 2010 Award.

**NTUC award winner gives up HR career to become a nurse**

# Mum's cancer made him take 'leap of faith'

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**I**N 2004, when Mr Christopher Kan found out his mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer, he decided to switch jobs.

"I decided that I would consider the healthcare industry," the 46-year-old told The New Paper.

Mr Kan took a "leap of faith" to join the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in 2005 as a healthcare attendant.

At that point, his previous job in the transportation and manufacturing industries was at risk after 13 years. His company was then undergoing major restructuring.

So the career switch made sense.

Sadly, his mother died just before he started his healthcare attendant course.

But he stuck to it and five years on, his dedication has paid off.

Last week, he was one of 118 winners in this year's NTUC May Day CBF (Cheaper, Better, Faster) Model Partnership 2010 Award.

The award recognises outstanding workers and organisations for exceptional performance and contributions by improving productivity (Cheaper), enhancing competency (Better) and becoming more adaptable (Faster).

Said Mr Kan: "The award is an affirmation that my contributions are recognised by the management. I am grateful for their support and guidance."

**Not easy**

But the job switch wasn't easy.

In 2004, he was earning \$2,400 at his previous job as a senior human resource assistant.

Now he's earning \$1,400 but Mr Kan feels he made the right move.

He said: "I feel a sense of fulfilment working with psychiatric patients. Looking after such patients is a challenge and I like it."

It's different working with patients from other hospitals, he said.

"I have to get closer to the patients compared to staff from other hospitals. I have to get to know them and I have to gain their trust so that they will co-operate with us," he said.

"The patients will be more compliant if they trust you. It makes a big difference in how well you can look after them, from the time they wake up, to eating their food and medication and showering."

In 2006, a patient's daughter wrote to the hospital expressing her appreciation of the care shown by Mr Kan.

For his outstanding performance, he was awarded IMH's "Sayang Award" that year, which recognises staff for their dedication and hard work.

He said he couldn't have done it alone and

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- Mr Christopher Kan

was lucky to have assistant nurse Yeo Shea Wen, 47, show him the ropes when he was a newbie at the job.

But he is even more grateful to his wife, Madam Celine Lau, 44, an accounts executive, for her understanding and patience.

"So much has changed with this job. Not just with the pay cut, but also with the changing of my work hours as I work shifts now," he said.

The couple do not have any children.

Said Madam Lau: "I am supportive of my husband's choice of work. I can tell that he has both the aptitude and attitude for it."

"I have seen the cards that the patient's families and the patients themselves have written him."

But he's not done yet.

Mr Kan is now back in school pursuing a diploma in nursing at Nanyang Polytechnic.

He's in the first year of the three-year course.

His classmates are mostly aged between 17 and 19, and according to the polytechnic spokesman, Mr Kan is the oldest nursing student in his cohort.

Madam Lau said of her husband: "He is a people person. He also has no issues relating to his much younger classmates."

When he graduates from his course, he will be 49 years old and starting his career as a staff nurse.

"There is no such thing as job stability for life but I hope to be able to do this job for as long as I can," he said.