



Dr Lynne Lim, director of NUHS' hearing centre, using an audioscope during an ear screening of Mr Dave Cheow, who has hearing loss. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

New degree course on tackling hearing problems

By KEZIA TOH

SINGAPORE'S first degree course related to hearing problems will kick off next year, in response to the challenges raised by the country's greying population.

The two-year Master of Science in Clinical Audiology will cover topics that include helping patients cope with going deaf.

The Republic is already "late into the game", said Associate Professor Lynne Lim, who initiated the programme.

"The countries in the region all have long-standing programmes; and there are too few audiologists here, which cannot meet our clinical needs," said the 43-year-old director of the hearing centre at the National University Health System (NUHS).

Malaysia and India have degree programmes, for example. But there is no Singapore degree course in audiology.

The new course, to start in August next year at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, will have a focus on helping society. A community audiology module

will cover community hearing health issues.

Hearing worsens with age. While 37 per cent of people in their 50s have some form of hearing loss, the figure goes up to 64 per cent for those in their 60s.

This is comparable to the situation in the United States, where a study last year found that nearly two-thirds of those aged 70 and older had hearing problems.

Dr Lim is working with senior NUHS audiologist Jenny Loo to set up the curriculum.

Applications open from the end of December. The course will enrol 20 students in the first cohort next year, and 25 to 30 in subsequent batches.

Applicants will need to have a basic degree in science, life sciences or engineering, or relevant industry experience.

Mr Winston Oh, 44, is planning to apply, after working as a general manager at a hearing devices company for the past 10 years.

"Fitting hearing aids is only a portion of what audiology is about. I want a broader view so I can better understand customers' needs in the future."

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