

# COURSE FOCUS

## ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES, MEDICINE, DENTISTRY & PHARMACY

ACCORDING to Datuk Dr Kamaruddin Md Isa, director general of Department of Veterinary Services Malaysia, there is a huge variety of job scopes within animal science that depends on the trend of the animal health service industry, social shifts, and public and economic demand.

*Course Focus* speaks to Dr Kavitha Jayaseelan and Dr William Chin, who are testaments to the great deal of work veterinarians do, whether in zoos, livestock farms or laboratories, to help improve the welfare of animals.

### The guardian

Dr Kavitha has always had a connection

with animals. She cites her father, who is also a veterinarian, as her inspiration.

After finishing her Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, Dr Kavitha looked for pre-university options to pursue veterinary medicine at a public institution.

She chose to enrol in Form 6 instead of the diploma programme at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) because she wanted to keep her options open; Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM) qualifications are recognised worldwide, whereas UPM's animal science diploma caters specifically for the university's own degree.

With her STPM results, she applied for the veterinary medicine course in UPM. Much to her disappointment, she was given a spot to pursue a biotechnology course at a different university instead.

Dr Kavitha was determined to become a veterinarian and after one year of constant appeal, she enrolled in UPM as a student of veterinary medicine.

The five years of veterinary medicine studies has its challenges. Many who enrol do not understand the actual nature of the job and the scope of animal species and job specifications they will have to deal with. They end up not finishing the course.

"Don't give up so easily," advises Dr Kavitha.

It was in her third year that Dr Kavitha decided she wanted to pursue a career in wildlife veterinary medicine instead of commercial general practice.

She chose Zoo Negara for her first-year practical placement and subsequently volunteered there. With this experience, Dr Kavitha successfully applied for a permanent position there after graduation.

The job of a veterinarian at a zoo is a whole different ball game from practice in a clinic. The veterinarians at Zoo Negara are pushed to be innovative in treating animals that sometimes can be dangerous to the veterinarians.

Be it the successful birth of a newborn fawn or encouraging a hand-raised chimpanzee to join its troop, Dr Kavitha celebrates these events as successes.

### The scientist

With a degree in veterinary medicine, you can also contribute to medical solutions for animals. Fields such as natural science healthcare are growing to provide effective medication and treatment for livestock and farm animals. This was where Dr Chin chose to contribute his knowledge.

His interest in veterinary medicine was inspired by his love for biology in his school days. To keep his option open, he decided to pursue Form 6 as his pre-university foundation so he could then apply to public higher institutions in Malaysia.

"While most of my peers were pursuing medicine or pharmacy, I found veterinary medicine more interesting. It presented the opportunity to study not just one species but covered many types of mammals, reptiles, fishes and other creatures," he says.

Dr Chin pursued his Degree in Veterinary Medicine at UPM.

Dr Chin was involved in volunteering at turf clubs, zoos, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation programmes, small animal clinics, animal non-governmental organisations and livestock farms to improve on skills and knowledge prior to joining the work force.

He also had the opportunity to be part of a student exchange programme in South Africa and had first-hand experience dealing with the conservation of Africa's big-five animals - lions, buffaloes, rhinoceroses, leopards and elephants.

Starting off in the livestock industry, Dr Chin is now involved in the scientific aspect of

veterinary medicine for InQpharm Group Sdn Bhd as senior manager of technical marketing in the Animal Health Divisions.

Dr Chin aims to develop novel solutions to livestock animal health issues and diseases due to an increase of antibiotic resistance in disease-causing bacteria.

### Becoming a veterinarian

● Minimum requirements in SPM/O-Levels:

- Credit in English, mathematics, additional mathematics
- Pass in Bahasa Malaysia

● Minimum requirements in STPM or Matriculation

- CGPA 3.0

● Local education options for Degree in Veterinary Medicine:

- Universiti Putra Malaysia**
  - Alternative entry pathway: Diploma in Animal Science & Production or Asasi Sains Pertanian (foundation in agricultural science)
- Universiti Malaysia Kelantan**
  - Alternative entry pathway: foundation programme (for bumiputera students only)

● Foreign education options for a veterinary medicine degree:

**HELP University American Degree Program:**

- Health Science Program majoring in Veterinary Science
- Complete degree in the US or Canada

**Indonesia:**

- Bogor Agricultural University, Jakarta
- Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta
- Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya

● Institutions that are recognised and accredited are listed under the Second Schedule of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1974.

● Upon graduation, graduates have to be registered with the Malaysian Veterinary Council and obtain a current Annual Practising Certificate to practise eligibly.

"Malaysia has slightly more than 2,000 registered veterinarians in the country under the Malaysian Veterinary Council. Graduates will have no problem getting a job or opening up their own practice," says Dr Chin.

# Go beyond the ordinary

