



Madam Chow works in a behavioural health unit, helping people recovering from mental problems. ST PHOTO: SAMUEL HE

Nurse wins top award for her dedication

■ BY CHERYL ONG

AS AN enrolled nurse, Madam Doreen Chow cannot dispense medications or carry out intravenous (IV) treatments like a full-fledged registered nurse.

But her dedication to her patients and love for her work in the behavioural health unit at Mount Elizabeth Hospital ensure she is just as valuable as her more qualified colleagues.

For her efforts, the 53-year-old was presented yesterday with the Tan Chin Tuan Nursing Award – the highest honour for enrolled nurses here.

Madam Chow joined the profession after graduating from a nursing school in Toa Payoh in the 1970s.

Enrolled nurses can become registered nurses through a nursing diploma programme conducted by Nanyang Polytechnic or

Ngee Ann Polyclinic, but Madam Chow decided not to pursue this, choosing instead to focus on her family.

“I wanted to make sure my children could focus on their education, so I decided to set aside my wish to enrol in a course to become a registered nurse,” she said. She has a son, 18, and a daughter, 23.

Her patients, for the most part, are recovering from mental problems and can sometimes be abusive, especially those suffering from anorexia, who refuse food despite their ailing health.

Last year, Madam Chow caught a teenage patient sneaking rice into the bathroom so she could flush it away. The girl shouted at her for intruding on her privacy, but the nurse shrugged it off.

“They can be very hurtful and abusive when they insult my pro-

fession, but I know they really need our help,” she said.

Some months later, the teenager recovered and returned to the hospital to thank Madam Chow and apologise for what she said.

Madam Chow’s colleague of eight years, senior counsellor Judy Koh, praises her stoic attitude, and said she is someone who can always be relied on.

“Sometimes when I am feeling down at work, I turn to her as well because I know she will understand what I am going through,” said Ms Koh.

Founded by the D.S. Lee Foundation, the Tan Chin Tuan Nursing Award was set up in memory of the late banker and philanthropist Tan Chin Tuan.

Second place went to Ms Leow Siew Tin of Singapore General Hospital, and third place to Ms Neng Noorliza Neng Ismail of National University Hospital (NUH). Seven other enrolled nurses won merit awards.

The winners received their awards yesterday evening from Health Minister Gan Kim Yong at NUH.

There were 7,500 enrolled nurses in Singapore last year.