

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE **A MIDWIFE**

Being a nurse, they say, is not for everyone. When you're working in a labour ward, the well being of mothers and their newborns are in your hands and that's quite a responsibility to take on. Royani Binti Hj Singisan, 39, has been involved in midwifery services for the past 19 years. She started her career at a private hospital and stayed on. Here's her story.





As a young girl, Royani did not initially wish to work in the nursing field. Instead, she was interested in teaching and wanted to become a teacher. "At the time, the country's economy wasn't doing too well," she said. "So my parents urged me to try nursing. My father saw job opportunities in an industry that thrived regardless of the weak economy," she said.

Today, after nearly two decades in this field and as the head of her department at Columbia Asia Hospital Puchong, her responsibilities are huge. "I have to make sure that my staff is always competent, knowledgeable and have the right skills to care for patients. Patience and sincerity are really important because we face people from all walks of life. These are priceless experiences and they teach us how to face and handle different situations."

Being a labor ward/charge nurse is not just about coming to work each day to make sure that there is enough staff to care for patients. Royani has to lead the staff in the labor room as well as the nursery department. She's also responsible to ensure total quality of management of nursing services and continuous improvement of the nursing services in line of the hospital policy and procedure. "We also need to constantly remind ourselves that there are two lives involved; the mother and the baby."

So what else does the job require, one might wonder? What does it take to be a midwife heading the labour ward and nursery? The main issue, of course, is to assure the safety of patients and to give them the best labor/nursery services. She also follows up on antenatal cases and postnatal mothers and babies till they are well enough to go home. Royani also gives antenatal talks on preparation for childbirth including topics such as breastfeeding, so that couples can prepare themselves to become parents.

"As someone who leads the labor room and the nursery, I need to be with the team especially when there are cases such as pre-eclampsia, pre-term labor and premature babies; to ensure that everything runs smoothly," she shared. "Other than that, I do also have to monitor my staff to ensure that they continuously implement safety and quality patient care at all times; hold monthly department meetings, send staff for training and monitor achievements of staff, especially junior nurses," she continued. Royani also assists the gynecologist/obstetrician if needed, in delivering/receiving babies in the operation theater especially when things get really busy.

THE SECRET OF JUGGLING BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY

As she speaks of her duties at work, it's hard to imagine that there'll be any time left over for anything else in her life, but amazingly, Royani still manages to have ample time (and energy) to run a happy home with her husband and two school-going children!

"Time management is essential. Being a nurse is a profession that requires solid time management. There are times when I would be on-call and may be called back to the hospital at odd hours. Every morning I wake up as early as 5am and start preparing myself for work and my kids for school. After I send them to school, I would drive to the hospital and ensure that I arrive at least 20 minutes before I start work," she explained.

"Then, I go to my department and look through handed-over reports given by night nurses to day-nurses. I make

my way home between 4pm to 5pm depending on how busy my day goes."

When Royani gets home, she takes on no lesser duties than a stay-at-home mom. She makes a bee-line for the kitchen to prepare dinner for her hubby and kids before they're home from work and school respectively. After dinner, she spends quality time with her family, help the kids with their homework and watches TV with her husband. "Still, even at home, I'm always in touch with my staff in case they need to update me on any issue or incident that happens at the hospital."

"I don't deny that my job requires a lot of time. The work never ends. Every day before coming to work, I will make a to-do list and make sure that I meet my to-do targets for that day. Back home, I will cook my family's favorite dishes. Mealtimes is a time when we all can get together. We will watch TV together on weekdays. During school holidays and weekends, I make full use of my time to be with my loved ones because time with them is so precious. I am lucky to have a husband who understands my career and the busy hours that come along with it. He helps me take care of our kids," Royani stated with conviction.



OF CHALLENGES AT WORK

Undoubtedly, the labor ward and the nursery are not easy departments as we can imagine, but the challenges are not only as we expect. "Although I've been working for quite some time, there are still others who have been around before me. It is quite a delicate situation, you know, when it comes to handling staff who are older than I am. I have to be tactful with them compared to my junior staff."

As the head of her department, Royani explained that there's no avoiding problems in making changes and transformations among the earlier generation; especially if they were so used to being in their comfort zone, having done things the same way for years. "However, if you can prove the effectiveness of the changes that you

wish to make, plus have lots of patience in guiding the staff, then *Insyallah*, it can be done." As for criticisms and comments, Royani revealed that she takes them in her stride and works on whatever needs fixing or improvement.

JOB SATISFACTION AND PASSION

Living life without passion isn't living at all, and when one's work does not bring about a sense of satisfaction, there is almost no point of doing it. Royani feels happy every time she sees a mother deliver her baby safely. "Hearing her baby's cries is a blessing to me. The smiles and tears of her husband show such joy. That is the satisfaction that I get as a labour room/nursery staff."

"I also look forward to moving up from one step to the next in my nursing

career. To me, you have to make progress in your career and not just sit in one place."

To those who are thinking of getting into this field, Royani's advice is to guard the responsibility that is entrusted upon them. "Every leader must show a good example to his/her staff. Always think positive — even when there is conflict, we can resolve amicably. We have to be strong and open to criticisms," she generously shared.

"One thing to remember is to set a goal of what you want to achieve on that day workwise, and most importantly, ensure the goals are achieved before going back home. As for me, the staff is like my children; I have an ongoing goal to shape them and ensure that they become medical staff who are competent."

