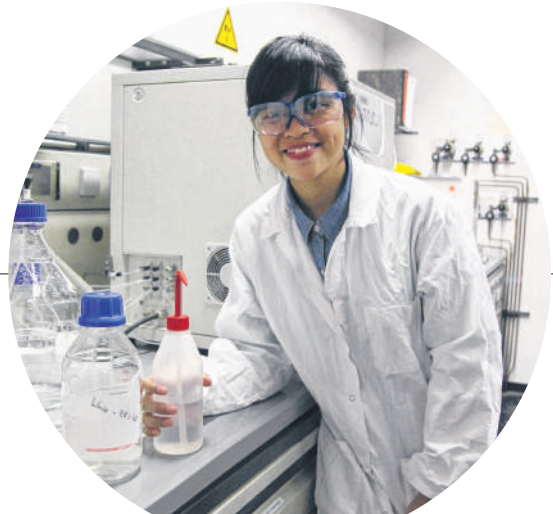


IN HER ELEMENT: Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak in a Technischen Universität München laboratory.



She wants to learn about cancer

In the wake of mum's ordeal with the illness, JC student goes for sponsored research trip to German university

Reports by LINETTE HENG
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She was determined to understand cancer after her mother's battle with the disease.

As Madam Junaina Basir was enduring rounds of chemotherapy and operations, Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak lugged her school books to the hospital.

Last week, the 18-year-old Tampines Junior College student returned from a 10-day sponsored research trip to the Technischen Universität München (TUM) in Germany.

While in Germany, she studied about disinfecting water as bacteria in water could lead to colorectal cancer.

Elicia, who researched the topic, said: "There are pathogens in water, such as e.coli, that can cause gastrointestinal disease.

"Research has shown that these bacteria are more commonly found in the colons of patients with colon cancer than those who are healthy."

INTEREST

Her interest in the subject was sparked by her mother's ordeal.

In 2012, Madam Junaina, a 41-year-old housewife, was diagnosed with third-stage colorectal cancer. That year, Elicia was also preparing for her O levels.

Fearing for her mother, Elicia stayed by her side during her treatment. Throughout the whole process, the oldest of four children had her textbooks and study notes with her.

Madam Junaina pulled through and Elicia emerged as one of the top students in her school with an L1R5 (English and five relevant subjects) score of 13.

Madam Junaina's cancer is now in remission.

The ex-Springfield Secondary student said: "I was feeling messed up at first and didn't know how to deal with it. But my teacher provided me with moral support and I was driven to work even harder."

Madam Junaina recalled: "It was the darkest period of our lives. I wanted her to do well and

carry the burden on my own, but she insisted on staying with me.

"She helped me to clean my wounds and at the same time, her notes would be beside her."

Madam Junaina then told her daughter about a programme she heard from a social worker at their family service centre, SBL Vision.

The programme, Building the Future 2014, is a collaboration between TUM Asia and The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund. (See report below)

Elicia, who last travelled beyond Malaysia when she was six, jumped at the opportunity to join the programme and travel overseas.

She said with a laugh: "I went to the supermarket and bought some sanitiser (to prepare for the trip). It's just a habit. I was about to buy a jacket, but the weather turned warmer.

"It was a 12-hour-long flight, but it was my first time taking such a long flight so I was excited."



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— Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak

HOST FAMILY

When Elicia was in Munich, she stayed with a host family who took her around the city.

She recounted: "I really enjoyed the cultural exchange. The family had two daughters, who were around my age. I experienced daily life in Germany and got to see many old, historical buildings."

Elicia worked on her project based on current research on disinfecting water conducted by the university.

She was also impressed by the institution's state-of-the-art equipment and spent three days in its laboratory.

"There is a device that could disinfect water just by using a diamond electrode. Usually, chemicals are added instead," she said.

Elicia, who will be taking her A levels this year, plans to study either forensic science or arts and social sciences in university.

No plans to go back to Munich or to study overseas?

"My family is in Singapore and I don't want to be away from them. Maybe an exchange programme would be good," she said.



ALL SMILES: Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak with her mother, Madam Junaina Basir. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TUM ASIA

TUM Asia's Building the Future project

Building the Future is a project by Technischen Universität München (TUM) Asia for children from underprivileged families.

This year, two post-secondary students (either from junior college or polytechnic) who are beneficiaries of The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund were given the opportunity to visit the TUM campus in Germany.

Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak was one of them. Applicants must take subjects

that involve sciences, mathematics or engineering.

They are also required to submit a short essay on why they should be selected for the project.

Selected students will be exposed to the possibilities of being in the field of engineering, science and/or technology by immersing in the top engineering university in Germany, including meeting Nobel Laureates, sitting in on lectures, and visiting their laboratories.