



SUARA FPMPAM

Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations, Malaysia

Issue 1/2020

Message from the President

Dr Steven Chow Kim Weng



Fellow Colleagues,

Year 2020 have started with a Big Bang for all.

The rapid spread of the new Coronavirus has ignited great alarm around the world. It reminds us of the SARs and subsequently the A1H1 epidemics not too many years ago. The easy availability of cheap air-travel was a key factor for its efficient global cross-border spread.

We see many people and even governments over-reacting in the futile attempt to prevent spread of the disease, some irrationally and some hysterically. Reports of fatalities and abundance of fake news are now accompanied by reports of stigmatization of things and people of Chinese and Asian origin. The spill-over of the current trade war between the US and China is also adding fuel to this fire.

As doctors, we can help by advising the good old prescription of sensible precaution and debunk the propagation of senseless speculations.

Good hand washing, good personal hygiene and avoidance of high-risk environment and unnecessary travel for the elderly and those at risk with major underlying and immune-compromising diseases are clearly common-sense advice.

Life must go on as usual.

At the end of the day, herd immunity will tame this pathogen, like what it did to SARs and A1H1.

Whilst all this is played around the world, I urge our members not to loose sight of the recent development in the healthcare landscape in Malaysia. All signs are pointing to debut of the impending National Health Insurance and its accompanying healthcare reforms and more regulations; in what spirit and form we are yet to know. How it will impact on us, the private medical practitioners, the patients and the tax-payers is still kept under wraps. As we have said in the past, the devil is in the details and until it is revealed we can only pray that there will be sustainable role for affordable, quality private care in the future landscape.

The Federation has taken on the task of publishing a book on Health Care in Malaysia. The objective is to inform policymakers and the general public about various issues plaguing Malaysia's health care system, but more importantly, to also suggest bottom-up solutions for reforms. Health care reforms should not be dictated from the Ministry of Health alone, but they should be devised and worked on together by stakeholders and people on the ground who are directly impacted by these policies. With the insights from various invited authors, we hope to influence policy through this book and bring real change for a healthier Malaysia.

Editor's Note

Dr Yek Sing Chee



Let us put our hands together to pray for the Coronavirus epidemic to get over with and to carry on with our life.

It's been a few months now, and the disease doesn't seem to get better but continue to vent its rage.

In this trying time, let us not be pointing finger and stereotyping another human being, rendering help and assistance in whichever way may be required; be it in the form of medical or human resource or just some comforting words, in alleviating this pain.

Let's us not become selfish and be humane and reasonable in our behaviour and action in facing this ill that had never before occur in such magnitude and no one foresaw its coming.

We should show more compassion and be more empathetic in dealing with this.

We, the medical fraternity, will be affected in a big way. We need to face this in trepidation, in spite of the fear of how contagious this deadly virus may be. We will still need to go on treating patients and facing the unknown danger.

You could call it occupational hazard or duty call, we will still need to go on despite the great danger.

To our fellow colleagues in other parts of this world who have sacrificed their life in fighting this virus along side with their people, we salute them and may their souls find eternal peace and for those who are still combating the disease despite knowing the great danger that they are in, our prayers are with them.



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The Pursuit of Fees Regulation Ends in Deregulation

Dr Shanmuganathan TV Ganeson, Honorary Secretary, FPMPAM

On 11th June 2019, YB Datuk Seri Dr Haji Dzulkefly b Ahmad, Minister of Health Malaysia, invited GPs to a town hall meeting in Putrajaya.

FROM THE STAR

PUTRAJAYA: The Health Minister has the power to amend the fee schedule of general practitioners (GPs) without going through Cabinet, says a medical association.

The Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations, Malaysia (FPMPAM) Honorary Secretary, Dr G Shanmuganathan, said this was provided for under Section 107 of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act.

"It says that the Minister, may from time to time, amend the fee schedule by publishing it in the gazette. Why the need to go through Cabinet?" he asked in a town hall session between the Health Minister and GPs on Tuesday (June 11).

The GPs have been urging the Health Ministry to increase their fees by harmonising their fees with that of medical doctors in private hospitals.

The consultation fees for GPs working in private hospitals were revised between RM35 and RM125 in 2013, but not for private GPs operating clinics from shoplots, which remain between RM10 and RM35.



The GP fees, as stated in the 7th Schedule of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services (Private Medical Clinics and Private Dental Clinics) Regulations 2006, had not changed in 27 years.

GPs have been calling for the fee harmonisation as provided for in Schedule 13 of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services (Private Hospitals and Other Private Healthcare Facilities) Regulations 2006 when it was revised in 2013.

Dr Shanmuganathan said he was disappointed that the matter still had to be referred to the Majlis Tindakan Kos Sara Hidup Negara or NACCOL (National Cost of Living Action Council).

On 9th May 2019, the Health Minister said the Cabinet did not reject the proposal but it would be discussed at the National Cost of Living Council meeting before being brought up in Cabinet again. He said that on 24th April 2019, he had handed over a memorandum to the Cabinet recommending the amendment to harmonise the fees.

While the Cabinet understands the need and rationale for the recommendation, a meeting has suggested that the matter be discussed and subsequently be brought up with the Cabinet again, he said.

He then said he would meet with GPs in a town hall meeting.

At the town hall meeting, Dr Dzulkefly assured the more than 800 GPs that he and his team in the Ministry supported their request



for the fee harmonisation. He said the Cabinet felt the issue was the timing as the increase would have an impact on the economy.

Dr Dzulkefly admitted that although he could change the fee schedule, as the government is premised on "shared prosperity" and serving marginalised groups, all policies will be subjected to rigorous debate in the Cabinet.

"Although I have the right, this is the way forward for me to get endorsement from the Cabinet. They are not saying no but it is a question of timing," he said.

6th December 2019: Health Minister Deregulates Private Doctors Fees

EXCERPTS FROM THE STAR

KUALA LUMPUR: Doctors and dentists in private clinics and hospitals can soon decide how much to charge their patients, following a decision by the Cabinet to deregulate the fee structures and let free market reign.

The latest decision will strengthen the consumers' power to choose their doctors.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, who announced this, said the Cabinet had assessed the matter holistically and comprehensively as well as taken into consideration the recommendations from the National Cost of Living Council.

The Cabinet is also concerned about the need to amend the Seventh Schedule of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services (Private Medical Clinics and Private Dental Clinics) Regulations 2006, which has not been amended since it was enforced in 2006, he said.

"As such, the Cabinet has agreed to abolish the control over consultation fees under Act 586."

"With the control of consultation fees abolished, doctors can now determine their own consultation fee rates," he said in a statement on Friday, 6th December.

The abolition of the fee control will include all registered facilities (in the Seventh Schedule) and licensed facilities (13th Schedule), said Dr Dzulkefly.

The fees for GPs and dentists, as stated in the Seventh Schedule, have not changed in 27 years. In 2013, the consultation fee was gazetted for medical officers working in private hospitals under the 13th Schedule, but was overlooked for GPs and dentists working in private clinics under the Seventh Schedule.

The current fees of RM10 to RM35 for GPs and dentists practising in shoplot clinics have not been revised since 1992 while medical officers at private hospitals who have the same qualifications have been charging between RM30 and RM125 per consultation.

Following this, Dr Dzulkefly said the Ministry would look into new rules to strengthen the current regulations for them to be more transparent and friendly in the service delivery for patients.

"Among others, the consultation fees must be displayed clearly so that patients are aware of the fees before getting treatment," he said.

If patients are not happy with the charges or services received in any of the private facilities, they can lodge a complaint with the Private Medical Practice Control Section at ckaps.aduan@moh.gov.my for further investigation, he said.

The Ministry will also hold sessions to explain the matter to various groups.

The Poisons Act or Rang Undang Undang (RUUR)

Code Blue broke the news on the first reading in Parliament of the proposed amendments on the RUUR by the Ministry of Health, where among others, doctors would be fined or jailed if they refused to provide a prescription on request. The news created uproar in the medical fraternity, and further dissection into the proposed amendments revealed an attempt to sneak in amendments that would tread upon existing provisions in the Medical Act, much to the detriment of registered medical practitioners.

FROM THE STAR: 5th December 2019

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has decided to defer the tabling of the Poisons (Amendment) Bill 2019 for its second reading to next year, says Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

The Bill, which was listed as the first item on Parliament's Order Paper, was up for its second reading and debate before on Thursday (December 5).

Dr Zulkefly however, said the second reading would be postponed to the next Parliament meeting in March next year.

When met at the Parliament lobby, Dr Zulkefly said that the second reading of the Bill was postponed to allow more input for improvements.

He said that he will be holding an engagement session with the relevant stakeholders for their views.

"The Bill was tabled in Parliament on 25th November for its first reading but drew flak from various national medical and dental organisations."

Further to this announcement, medical, dental and veterinary organisations, met on 14th December, at the invitation of the MMA, to identify various flaws in the proposed amendments.

As the matter has apparently been referred to a Parliament Selection Committee, the FPMPAM will not be a signatory to a joint letter on the flaws in the amendments, by the other associations.

3rd FPMPAM/IPH Annual Convention 2019 incorporating 2nd FPMPAM Malaysian Healthcare Conference

31st August - 1st September 2019

Connexion Conference & Event Centre, Bangsar South, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations, Malaysia (FPMPAM) in collaboration with the Independent Practitioners' Healthcare (IPH) had successfully organised the 3rd FPMPAM/IPH Annual Convention 2019 incorporating the 2nd FPMPAM Malaysian Healthcare Conference for the private general practitioners on 31st August to 1st September 2019 at the Connexion Conference & Event Centre, Bangsar South, Kuala Lumpur. Similar to previous years, the convention provided a platform for medical and healthcare practitioners in the public and private sectors to discuss relevant issues in medical practice and to update themselves on the management of diseases and treatment with regard to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, allergies, infections, addiction, immune mediated diseases, gout and others. Approximately 250 delegates attended both conferences.



The theme for the conference "Hotspots in Outpatient Medicine and Malaysian Healthcare" had been carefully selected based on the current affairs in our new government's policy and public-private partnership programmes involving the private general practitioners which will and have affected their current practice in one way or another. Most of these policies or programmes were rolled out without prior consultation with the private sector. The debate was on whether these programmes are really beneficial to the public especially the B40 group and the private sector or merely a gimmick by the government to gain

popularity votes and/or in line with the ultimate agenda to disrupt the current private healthcare landscape in preparation for a single payor national health insurance for healthcare delivery.

In view of the rapid changes in the private healthcare landscape, it is vital to have all the private general practitioners to be united and stand together to coherently voice their concerns through the appropriate channel to the government for the benefit of the patients while at the same time, to think into diversifying into other aspects of healthcare such as early screening and prevention of diseases to provide a holistic approach to healthcare management of patients in the future.



Signing of the MOU between FPMPAM and AIMST University for Certificate in Basic Healthcare

1st September 2019

by Dr Tan Poh Teng Coordinator (FPMPAM) and Ms Rajeswari A/P Sinnasamy (AIMST University)

The MOU between AIMST University and FPMPAM was ready on 25th May 2019. It was signed on 1st September 2019. The agreement was signed by Professor Dr Yu Chye Wah, Dean, Faculty of Allied Health Professions and witnessed by Deputy Dean School of Nursing, Ms Rajeswari, coordinator, on behalf of AIMST University. The agreement on behalf of FPMPAM Dr Steven Chow Kim Weng, President, FPMPAM signed on behalf of FPMPAM witnessed by Dr Tan Poh Teng, coordinator.

The objective of this programme is to improve and deliver quality healthcare services in the private sector perspective (PMPS Kedah/Perlis) led by Dr Tan Poh Teng. To enhance clinic assistant knowledge, Dr Tan organises several training course annually for

clinic assistants since 2007. Subsequently, in year 2010, the nursing conference/training course was arranged for clinic personnels and staff nurses. Finally, Dr Tan arranged intensive full time training module on certificate in basic healthcare. This module will commence in December 2020 at AIMST University. The duration of the course is 3 months that consist of 1-month lecture at AIMST University campus follow by 2 months clinical attachment at their own respective area of work. Further, at the end of the course the participants will be assessed by examination and be rewarded accordingly. AIMST University and FPMPAM will jointly provide scholarships for those participants who need financial assistance.



Doctors' Day Health Camp 2019

12th October 2019

Tegudon Tourism Village (TTV), Tegudon Village Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia

by Dr Rizin Kusop

Tegudon Village is located about 70 km from Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and populated mainly by Dusun Kadazan ethnics. The community mainly consists of farmers tending their paddy fields, rubber plantations and recently palm oil small plantations. A small but growing number of youths and young adults are now employed as government servants or in private companies around Sabah.



Doctors' Day is celebrated in Malaysia on every 10th October since 2015 by FPMPAM and its affiliates, including APPS. Doctors' Day is usually celebrated with charity works and services to the needy. This year, it was decided to be held in Tegudon Tourism Village (TTV), Kota Belud Sabah, on Saturday, 12th October 2019.

Planned since early of the year, the Health Camp saw participation of no less than 20 medical doctors (specialists and general practitioners), including two dental officers. These health personnel were largely from FPMPAM and APPS. The rest are from the Sabah Indian Associations and Dental Department of Kota Belud Hospital. The event was also assisted heavily by a sizeable number of trained nurses (both from medical as well as dental), volunteers from the Sabah Cancer Volunteers Association (PSKS) and supporting team members.

The manager and team in charge of the Tegudon Tourism Village (TTV) have also been very instrumental in ensuring the success of the event. They have provided the venue free of charge as well as sourcing facilities and equipment such as canopies, tables, chairs, public addresser (PA) system and food and drinks for the health team.

Lunch packs for the team members were graciously sponsored by BTC Restaurant Kota Kinabalu.

On the day, the health team started as early as 0800 hrs, with the main bulk of doctors arriving around 1000 hrs and lasted until 1530 hrs. The event was officiated by the president of FPMPAM, Dr Steven Chow, and complimented by Datuk Dr James Jeremiah,

the founder and advisor of APPS, by donating four decorative trees to the TTV site (two Cassia Fistula-Trengguli and two Tabebuia Rosea).

The event saw at least 250 villagers who came for the various services provided. Some of the services made available during the camp were basic health parameters (such as random blood sugar (RBS), blood pressure (BP), pulse rate, weight, height and body mass index), Dental Clinic (such as scaling, extraction, oral cancer screening and dental care counseling), eye clinic including on site eye glasses gifts, skin clinic, and general medical examination and consultation by doctors of various fields.

On top of that, medications were also prescribed freely for almost all ailments diagnosed during the event. Vitamins and anti-helminthic medications were given almost to all who came regardless of their illnesses.

A health talk in local language was given during lunch hour, conducted by the Sabah Cancer Volunteers Association (PSKS) and their permanent speaker.

In total, 217 villagers were recorded at the screening desk, another 60 plus at the dental clinic and 80 plus at the eye clinic with 46 spectacles given out. The most common immediate complaints seen during the event were those related upper respiratory tracts, gastro intestinal, skin and age related musculoskeletal ailments. The most common chronic illnesses seen was, not surprisingly, hypertension with various degree of control and compliance to follow up.

Feedback from the health team and villagers has been generally exceptionally good with most doctors happy with the arrangements and villagers being grateful for the event. Some villagers were however understandably unhappy that the pap smear and HPV screening were not available as promised. Efforts were being made to ascertain why the relevant group failed to show up on that day.



The Doctors' Day Health Camp was a successful event. Doctors and the rest of the health team members managed to visit a beautiful and serene place in Tegudon Tourism Village and at the same time serve the villagers. The clients were provided with otherwise difficult to access medical care, dental care and abundance supply of free medicines.



Special gratitude to Datuk Dr James Jeremiah (founder and advisor of APPS), Dr Steven Chow (President of FPMPAM), Dr Devadas Ramankutty (President of APPS), Mr Saiko Yuna (Chairman of TTV team), Mr Tahir Balinu (Village Head), Mr Sulingan Sagun (MPKK Chairman), Dr Syafika Abd Khalim (Dental Officer Hospital Kota Belud), Mr Lawrence Imui (President of

PSKS), Ms Melissa Lau (APPS Secretariat), Sabah Indian Association, nurses and staff from Permai Polyclinics Group, BTC Restaurant Kota Kinabalu and many more who have contributed to the event in one way or another.

See you all at Doctor's Day Health Camp 2020.





First APPS Scientific Conference

19th - 20th October 2019

The Magellan Sutera Resort, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

by Dr Rizin Kusop

The Association of Private Practitioners Sabah (APPS) was formed in 2015 with the mission to unite all private practitioners in Sabah. The association was affiliated to a parent body at the national level, Federation of Private Medical Practitioner Associations Malaysia (FPMPAM), and registered under Registrar of Societies (ROS).

This year, APPS has for the first time organised a scientific conference for medical health care workers in Sabah. The main aim of the conference was to foster unity among private practitioners especially General Practitioners (GPs) in Sabah. The other aims are to refresh existing medical knowledge, to get members updated about recent medical advances, to increase the awareness of the issues affecting GPs and to be reminded of roles and limitation as GPs.

After a long and arduous planning, the conference was successfully completed on 19th and 20th October 2019. The month of October was chosen because Doctors' Day is celebrated in Malaysia on 10th October every year. A total of 154 participants (118 medical doctors and 36 nurses) registered for the two-day event. The participants listened to 18 lectures which were carefully selected to cater for the needs of the current GPs. Among the topics covered were healthcare issues in Malaysia, legal pitfalls in practices, the statistics and distribution of GPs in Sabah, the need of comprehensive waste management in clinics and updates on various medical topics faced by GPs in their daily practices.



The lectures were given by 17 notable speakers. Some of the prominent speakers were Tan Sri Datuk Richard Malanjum, the former Chief Justice of Malaysia and Dr Milton Lum, an elected member of Malaysian Medical Council (MMC). MMC is the highest governing body for medical practitioners in Malaysia.

On top of the lectures, the participants also saw thirty exhibition booths, where latest medical services, products and equipment were being introduced to the doctors. The combination of lectures and exhibition were thought to further enhance the knowledge and exposure of the General Practitioners, who are otherwise confined to their four walled clinics only.



The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. In some aspects of the conferences such as venue, lectures, exhibition and registration, almost all respondents rated them either good or very good. Some of the participants suggested that this event should be held annually and it should be extended to at least 2½ days.

The success of the First APPS Scientific Conference was attributed to the highly dedicated team members of the organising committee. The organising committee was headed by Dr Rizin Kusop, who is also the Honorary Secretary of APPS. The President of APPS, Dr Devadas Ramankutty, who was very experienced in organising similar events, has been very instrumental in guiding the work. Datuk Dr James Jeremiah, the founder and advisor of APPS has also come out strongly to provide us with the much needed logistics and resources support, in organising the conference. Not to forget, the amazing secretariat team, headed by Ms Melissa Lau who has been working day and night in ensuring every practical details were taken care of, a very indispensable part of the organising team. Other notable members were Dr Mahen Naidu, Dr Francis Ambrose, Dr Saiful Bahri and the technicians, Mr Gary and Mr Adrian.





Upkeeping The Clinical Competence of New Medical Graduates for Their House-Officership - The Perak Mentor-mentee Programme

by Dr Yap Foo Ngan (Family Physician), Dr Amarjeet Kaur (General Practitioner) and Dr Yee Meng Kheong (Resident Anaesthetist, Hospital Fatimah)

In the olden days, medical graduates were able to start their house-officership soon after graduation. However the first author gathers from personal contacts with medical graduates he has taught that since 2016 they have to wait for months before they get their house-officer job. Over the past three years the waiting period has become longer to one year or more. It is very important that the medical graduates have opportunities to keep in touch with medicine during these months.

In early cognizance of this, Dr Steven Chow, the President of Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations, Malaysia (FPMPAM) launched the FPMPAM Mentor-Mentee Programme for the newly qualified medical graduates in November 2017.¹

The FPMPAM Mentor-Mentee Programme (MMP) For Newly Qualified Medical Graduates¹

The FPMPAM started the MMP as a service with the objective to upkeep and prepare new medical graduates in clinical skills for their house-officer tasks during the many months while waiting to get employed.

It is a voluntary programme involving mentors in the Malaysian private medical practices. The presidents of state private medical associations under FPMPAM act as state coordinators. There is no payment incurred. However a token allowance may be offered by some clinics to the mentees.

The Mentor-Mentee Programme (MMP) In Perak^{2,3,4}

Dr Yee Meng Kheong, the President (2017-2019) of Perak Medical Practitioners' Society (PMPS), started the Perak MMP Subcommittee chaired by Dr Amarjeet Kaur with himself and Dr Yap Foo Ngan as a committee member.

News about Perak MMP was disseminated in local newspapers. Dr Amarjeet wrote about it in the Ipoh-based IPOH ECHO, the only community newspaper in Malaysia.⁵ Sin Chew Daily reported it through the effort of Dr Yek Seng Chee (active member and PMPS President 2015-2017).

The Ipoh-based Universiti Kuala Lumpur Royal College of Medicine Perak (UniKL-RCMP) expressed interest and met the

Perak MMP Committee about providing details of the MMP to their new MBBS graduates.

The first Perak MMP batch started in February 2018. Officially the programme runs for three months each time. As at November 2019 we have had four batches of mentees. The mentees come from various local and overseas universities. Some even come from states outside Perak. Our mentors are from different disciplines, clinic-based and hospital-based. They are located in Ipoh and other towns in Perak e.g. Taiping, Sitiawan, Langkap.

Before commencement of each official period of mentorship the Perak MMP Committee holds a meeting with the mentees to brief them on the programme and to allocate mentors. The mentees are reminded on communication skills, patient confidentiality and other 'dos and don'ts'.

A WhatsApp group is set up for each batch. Through this channel, feedbacks are received from both the mentees and the mentors, and relevant information including some local medical CPD sessions are disseminated for the mentees' benefits.

In appreciation of the mentorship provided, the PMPS presents to every mentor a Certificate of Appreciation.



Meeting with UniKL-RCMP's Professor Dato' Dr Subramaniam and Encik Anuar, July 2018

Table 1: Number of Mentors and Mentees in the Perak Mentor-Mentee programme 2018 - 2019

	Period	Number of Mentors	Number of Mentees	
			Registered*	Accepted*
1	February - April 2018	10	11	9
2	September - November 2018	14	30	17
3	February - April 2019	20	27	23
4	September - November 2019	20	18	14

*Not all medical graduates who registered could be accepted because of insufficient number of mentors. Some from other states were referred to their respective states according to their preferences at Dr Yee's initiative.

Some Comments by Mentees on the Perak Mentor-Mentee Programme

The Perak MMP has been well received by the mentees, as expressed in some mentees' comments below (full names omitted).



Meeting on 26th August 2018 with the second batch of mentees

"It was a very good experience for me to learn from a very experienced consultant. Dr N taught me a lot and he pushed me to read more and in details about certain topics. Despite of not having the opportunity to do more hands-on, I think the programme was really great and helped me to keep studying before being called for housemanship."

"It was a very good practice before HO. Dr Y is a very good mentor and we were allowed to observe most of the procedures. This programme is very beneficial."

"Dr L agreed to take me on a longer basis, so I am still going to his clinic actually. This attachment has been really fruitful and useful to me and I learnt many new things too. I really hope this programme will continue in order to benefit more people."

"Attachment with Dr N is very useful to me. Being an overseas student, Malaysian hospital is a new thing for me. Dr N helped me out a lot to get familiar with the Malaysian private hospital system."

"I was assigned under Dr J I was really glad to do my attachment under him as he exposed me to patients where he allowed me to do full system examinations and taking history on most of the patients. I was also exposed on how to handle FOMEMA patients under his guidance."

"Overall the attachment was very good experience. However, because of my lack of skill in understanding Chinese language, I couldn't understand some of consultation between Dr L and



Meeting on 20th January 2019 with the third batch of mentees

REFERENCES

1. Announcing the launch of the FPMPAM Mentor-Mentee Program (MMP) for Newly Qualified Medical Graduates, <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/fpmpam/posts/1718408414887852>. The FPMPAM Mentor-Mentee Programme in Perak 2018 - 2019
2. http://pmps.org.my/PMPS_News/PMPS-News-N19-Aug2018.pdf

Chinese patients. So, maybe after this, I need to learn more about this language."

"Good, flexible timing. I was able to be attached to a few of his home visits and dementia centre and nursing home visit."

"Dr S is a good mentor. I have learned a lot from him. Is a good experience that I have after my graduation. I hope there are more mentors so that more mentees can benefit from it. Thanks doctor. It is a great programme."

"I love this programme because it pushes me to do revision based on patient complaints and gain working experience in a clinic setting. Sometimes Dr A will give us homework to read, and we will discuss together on that topic."

"Dr M was a good mentor. He was very enthusiastic in teaching and explained everything very thoroughly. I got to see how procedures are done up close in the OT."

Conclusion: Appreciation and Appeal

Reading through the mentees' feedback carefully, you may appreciate that our mentees learn more than just clinical skills and knowledge. They are being prepared not just for house-officership but also for their future medical career. No doubt the rich experience of the mentors and their wisdom are of immense benefit to the mentees. We appreciate very much our mentors' contribution. We also appreciate our mentees' effort and feedbacks since we do learn much from them on a number of fronts. In fact a mentor said "Meeting these young doctors has been a tremendous blessing."

It can be seen from the table above there are often more mentees than mentors. It is worth noting also that some mentees have come from outside Perak to join us.

The next PMPS MMP is in February - April 2020. It is opened to application till 15th January 2020. Meanwhile as expressed by one mentee, we hope to have more mentors joining the programme. Interested practicing doctors and medical graduates are welcome to contact the following, even if you are outside Perak: Dr Amarjeet Kaur (012-5226 662) / Dr Yee Meng Kheong (017-5784 530) or email to: pmps.secretariat@gmail.com



Meeting on 25th August 2019 with the fourth batch of mentees

3. http://pmps.org.my/PMPS_News/PMPS-News-N20-Dec2018.pdf
4. http://pmps.org.my/PMPS_News/PMPS-News-N21-Apr2019.pdf
5. The IPOH ECHO, <http://www.ipohecho.com.my/v4/about-us>

Antarctica - The Last Pristine Wilderness

by Ms Molly Kong

In November 2019, I went on a 16-day cruise with the French (Marseilles-headquartered) expeditions company, PONANT, from Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego Province of Argentina to the West Falkland Island, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. This particular cruise marked the beginning of an association between PONANT and the National Geographic Society (headquartered in Washington DC), and this meant that there were experts on board the cruise ship, Le Soleal. They specialised in Antarctic species, geology, history, climate science and other topics relevant to the region.

Expectations

When I first made plans to go on a cruise of this kind, in early 2017, my expectations were general. I expected to see lots of snow and ice, glaciers, birdlife and sea life, and to have an enjoyable time. I expected it to be cold, even though the Antarctic summer was about to start. However, there was so much more, and the cold was not an issue (see later). The experience is overwhelming. The wildernesses are both vast and fragile and have a character like no other on the planet. The experience is unique and life changing and changes one's perspective on life and about nature.

Last Great Wilderness

West Falkland is not part of the Antarctic and is outside the Antarctic zone. It is part of the Falkland Islands which is British (although that is contested by Argentina). We landed on rubberised dinghies (called Zodiacs) on beaches. The Zodiacs carry up to 10 people plus a driver and are well adapted to small group transfers from ship to shore.



Zodiac - from cruise ship to shore

West Falkland has countless rookeries in which gulls, terns, albatrosses and other seabirds were nesting. Importantly it is the home of a number of penguin species, especially the Rockhopper (named for its obvious way of moving over the stony terrain).

West Falkland provided an interesting contrast to South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. It has been subjected to introduced species of plants and animals (one of our landings was at a beach within a sheep farm). It has some sparse human habitation and is not a wilderness. Because of the introduction of non-native species, it is not pristine.

Penguins

The behaviour of mass colonies of penguins is fascinating. I could have watched all day as the penguins bickered amongst themselves, marked out and defended nesting territory, and traded feathers and stones with each other. Feathers and stones are the building materials for nests. Penguins typically lay no more than one egg every one to two years, and pair up to incubate and hatch it, and to feed the penguin chicks when they hatch.



Warm welcome by the penguins at Saint Andrews Island



Penguins on the iceberg - wonder how they got onto the iceberg!



Moulting King Penguins



The way penguins move and relate to each other is unique, but also suggestive of human behaviour. It is hard not to take an anthropomorphic view when watching them, and to attribute human motives and attitudes to them as they move about. Penguin walking seems at first to be very comical as they shuffle back and forth and appear to be very engaged in the business of living in a large community. However they are extremely well adapted to their environment. They shuffle (quite quickly) on land, but move very fast through the water. They seem to ignore the human onlookers, and have undoubtedly learned that the latter pose no threat. The natural predators for penguins are sea birds that attack their eggs and chicks, and various types of seals (especially leopard seals) that attack and eat adult penguins.

We saw six types of penguins in this trip - Rockhopper, Adelie, Gentoo, Chinstrap, Macaroni (only one) and of course the King Penguins.



The chicks - about one year old - South Georgia



The sole and only one Macaroni penguin we saw



Penguins frolicking in the sea

South Georgia

South Georgia is sub-Antarctic and administered by the United Kingdom as the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Territory. Every effort is made to keep the wilderness aspects of South Georgia pristine and to ensure that non-native species of both plants and animals (such as rodents) are kept out. Expedition vessels such as ours are subject to a rigorous process of clothing and footwear cleaning both before and after each disembarkation. This ensures that there is no cross contamination between areas within South Georgia.

In South Georgia we saw masses of penguins belonging to other species, as well as fur seals and elephant seals. It was the beginning of the whale spawning season, and we saw some fin whales that were the advance parties of seasonal migrations south from warmer waters in Brazil and the South Atlantic.



The Rockhoppers - West Falkland



Rockhopper - Isn't he a beauty?



Playful cormorants - West Falkland

The Antarctic Peninsula

After two days of sailing from South Georgia we reached the Antarctic Peninsula. This is the closest part of the continent to any of the other continents. We encountered new penguin species and more leopard seals and also more whales, although it was early in their seasonal migration.

A special treat is the icebergs. We were able to see some turn in the water (as their centre of gravity slowly changes), and, on one occasion, an iceberg calving off from the glacier. Being the

beginning of summer, the great annual melt was well underway. However, as a result of climate change and the extent of that change over the past 50 years, the extent of the melt and of glacier retreat is accelerating.

The Antarctic is subject to an international Treaty (due to be renegotiated in 2048) under which all treaty signatories have agreed that it will remain undeveloped and that human activity will be devoted to peace and science. As a result the protocols for maintaining it as a pristine wilderness are especially strict and rigorously enforced by governments and cruise operators alike. We had to be especially careful about boot cleaning and ensuring that nothing was left after visiting each of the bays and beaches we visited.



Pristine Antarctica



No trespassing in my territory - seals can be aggressive even though they look relaxed

Overall Impressions

Many of my expectations needed correction.

The wildlife is abundant and endlessly fascinating, especially the penguins. I thought that I would quickly tire of watching them, but I was wrong. I am sure that their 'humanity' is part of what appeals and causes some sort of addiction to watching them go about their business. Although we saw six or seven different species, including many king penguins, their social behaviour is much the same across the species.

The ice and snow are also endlessly fascinating. The deep blues and hues and other shades (as a result of water and aeration) are beautiful. The scene is ever changing.

The cold is not a factor as I thought it would be. Of course the temperatures are low, but all the expedition group is well covered by appropriate layers of water-proofed clothing. It sometimes became very warm walking about and climbing the snowy hills in that gear, with sunny skies. On most days sun

glasses are a must. On all days, sunscreen needs to be applied to face and other exposed skin.

I realise that the Antarctic is a precious pristine wilderness, and that concerted action and continuing care is needed to keep it that way. The point about a wilderness is to prevent it from changing for the benefit of future generations. That does not stop it from changing forever those who experience it.

Pre-Cruise Sojourn

I took the opportunity to visit the Atacama Desert, a desert plateau in South America, covering a 1,000 km strip of land on the Pacific coast, west of the Andes mountains. The Atacama desert is one of the driest places in the world, with average rainfall of 0.04 inch of rainfall per year!! The tours were operated out of San Pedro de Atacama which itself is 2,407 metres above sea. It is an exhilarating experience to view the serene laguna and bubbling geysers at an altitude of over 4,000 metres and also the amazing Moon Valley which presents an extraordinary attractiveness by its similarity with the moon surface and the eroded rock formations and the Rainbow Valley with colourful rock formations (including greenish ones) as well.



Rainbow Valley



My travel buddies - second from the left is Margaret Ng, our coordinator

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