

COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNAECOLOGISTS



THE PIONEERS

Before the Second World War, the only specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology was an Australian lady doctor by the name of Marjorie Jean Lyon, who had qualified with the Membership of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (MRCOG) in London in 1934, and the FRCS Edinburgh in 1936. She joined the Malayan Medical Service on 30th July 1937 and was stationed in Johor Bahru in 1942 at the time of the Japanese advance. She was evacuated from Singapore but her ship was bombed and she was interned in Sumatra. After the war ended, she practised with the Malayan Medical Service until 1950, then returned to her native Western Australia and retired in 1970. She died in 1975.

In addition, there had been a few British and Malaysian doctors, including Salleh Abdul Hamid of Johor, who held the Diploma of the Royal College or DRCOG, but they confined themselves mainly to obstetrics and non-operative gynaecology. Another recognised post-graduate qualification in obstetrics was the Licentiate

in Midwifery from the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, which was held by Joseph Aeria in Penang and Awang Hassan in Johor. S Kanapathipillai and V J Seevaratnam also acquired this qualification after having been sent there by the colonial government and served as O & G specialists in Penang and Perak in the immediate post-war years. Other specialist qualifications included the Master of Midwifery, the Society of Apothecaries (MMSA), and the Master of the Art of Obstetrics (MAO) from Dublin. This was the specialist qualification held by Derek Llewellyn-Jones, when he was appointed Consultant at the General Hospital Kuala Lumpur (GHKL), in 1956, before he went on to obtain the MRCOG that same year.

Llewellyn-Jones was destined to play a leading role in initiating a training programme for young Malaysian doctors, who aspired to become obstetricians and gynaecologists. It was solely through his efforts that the obstetric and gynaecological unit in the GHKL, became the first unit in Malaysia and Singapore to be recognised by the RCOG as being adequate for six months of obstetric training that would go towards the mandatory two years of training required by them. It was Llewellyn-Jones' pioneering work, based on meticulous annual departmental reports, submitted to the RCOG that persuaded it to grant partial recognition of local training and arrange for Malaysian doctors to complete their training in UK hospitals and sit for the Membership examination. As more Malaysians returned from the United Kingdom with the MRCOG, they established their own units in Malaysian

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government hospitals. These units were in turn assessed and recognised for training by visiting teams from the RCOG. This was the catalyst that increased opportunities for a greater number of trainees and ushered in the beginning of a new chapter in Malaysian healthcare.

The other catalyst was the establishment of the University of Malaya (UM) teaching hospital in Kuala Lumpur in 1965, and the full accreditation by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1970, of its department of obstetrics and gynaecology headed by T A Sinnathuray who was Professor at that time. It was the first Malaysian hospital to be so recognised. The Foundation Professor of the Department was Donald Chan Pui Chee who obtained his MRCOG in 1958. I S Puvan (1966) and D K Sen (1962) were also on the academic staff as Associate Professors.

THE OBSTERICAL AND GYNAECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF MALAYSIA

The Obstetrical & Gynaecological fraternity has been fairly proactive and even before the formation of the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia in December 1966, a Society was set up. The Obstetrical & Gynaecological Society of Malaysia (OGSM) was set up in 1963. The first President was Dr S Lourdenaden who was then the head of one of the two units which had been set up in the newly-opened Kuala Lumpur Maternity Hospital in 1963.

The founding fathers had their first meeting on 13th April 1963, at the General Hospital, Johore Bahru,

to formally establish the Society. The Pro-Tem committee was appointed and comprised Dr S Lourdenaden (Chairman), Dr R S McCoy (Secretary and Treasurer), Dr P T Arasu, Dr Ariffin Ngah Marzuki, Dr J D Llewellyn-Jones and Dr E C Pink. The 1st Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the newly-opened Maternity Hospital Kuala Lumpur (MHKL) on the 1st August 1964. It was chaired by Dr S Lourdenaden and the nine-member quorum was joined by Dr T A Sinnathuray and Dr T H Lean as observers from the Singapore Society. A decision was made to forge closer ties between the two Societies with the goal of forming a Malaysian Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society.

This hope was documented in the 1964 Annual Report wherein the final entry stated “This report will probably be the second and last report of the Society, which will soon enlarge and encompass the states of Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak”. The Annual General Meeting on 16th April 1965 even proposed that the President of the Society be “alternated between Malaya and Singapore until such time, more members enrolled from the Borneo Territories”. This hope was manifested with the unanimous election of Professor Walter Tow Siang Hwa from the University of Singapore as President for the 1965/1966 session.

When Singapore became an independent Republic on 9th August 1965, it was decided that the two societies would have to part ways and function separately in their respective territories. The Society was renamed as the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia (OGSM) and was registered on 11th May 1965.

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An inaugural meeting of members of the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia, who are obstetricians and gynaecologists, was held on the 12th September 1993 at the Pantai Medical Centre Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. A total of 15 members attended this inaugural meeting. Dato' Dr R S McCoy was elected as Chairman of the interim committee and Dr Ong Hean Choon was the Secretary. The other members of the interim committee were Dato' Dr Johan Thambu, Dr P Boopalan and Dr Abdul Aziz Yahya. In 1994, the number of members of the Chapter was 53.

Dr P Boopalan took over as the Chairman of the Chapter in 1997 and he was followed by Dato' Dr Johan Thambu in 2005. The current strength of the College stands at a total of 167 members out of which there are a total of 42 Fellows. The number of life members is 48.

The Chapter of the College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists became the College of O&G in 1999. All the fellows and members of the College are specialists in Obstetrics and Gynaecology unlike the Society which has both specialists, trainee specialists and non-specialists as its members. All the fellows and members of the College are members of OGSM and many of them have been in one way or another been

instrumental in building up the Society to the level that it has been built up to.

The scope of activities and cooperation between the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia (OGSM) and the College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia (COGAMM) is that these two organisations are independent but exist to further the interests of the Profession and their members. There is considerable overlap in the stated objectives of the Society and that of the Academy. As far as possible, there should be no area of conflict between the two organisations. There should be broad agreement about the main areas of coverage by either organisation. Any overlap should be encouraged only if it serves to enhance the interests of the Profession as a whole. Activities already being carried out should continue as at present.

In essence, the OGSM will continue to organise the Annual Congress and the social activities along with it. It will also undertake public education as part of its corporate social responsibility programme. The COGAMM would be responsible for credentialing activities, for consensus development and for quality assurance activities. These two organisations exist to champion the best in women's health care and to support doctors to achieve excellence in their practice of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Compiled by

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