

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS



THE BEGINNING OF SPECIALISATION IN MEDICINE

As a former British colony, our medical services have had a long history of association with the specialist colleges of Britain. Although the head of medical services in each of the Federated Malay States were called State Surgeons, the nature of their work actually included public health, all fields of medicine, as well as surgery. However, some of these State Surgeons like Dr W L Braddon were in fact Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons. It was only in 1922 that three specialist posts for surgery were established in the Federated Malay States. They were filled by Dr C B Paisley in Taiping, Perak, Dr T W H Burne in Kuala Lumpur and Dr C S Wilson in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan.

The Malaysian pioneer in obtaining specialist surgical qualification was Dr Michael E Thiruchelvam. He obtained his FRCS in 1930 while on leave in London on his own initiative. As might be expected, he was not recognised by the medical services.

A watershed in our history occurred in the years from 1942 to 1945. The Japanese Occupation left the medical services in disarray. Of the pre-war expatriate surgeons, only Dr S J Campbell and Dr C P Allen returned to service after the Japanese Occupation. Things changed. Dr Thiruchelvam had his qualification recognised eventually. Surgical training here was recognised and Dr C V Jumeaux obtained his FRCS in 1949, and returned to serve in Kuala Lumpur. He became head of the department when Dr Allen retired in 1955. Registrar posts were created in 1955 in the larger general hospitals and meant for young doctors training for higher qualification.

The Royal Australian College of Surgeons began to conduct the Primary Examinations for the Fellowship in Surgery in Singapore in 1957. This made it easier for medical officers. They were able to be trained locally and just go overseas only for the Final Fellowship examination. The Royal Colleges of England, Edinburgh, Ireland and Australia, periodically assessed the Registrar posts of the general hospitals and accredited these posts.

Soon, more surgeons qualified. Dr S M A Alhady obtained his Fellowship in 1955 and was posted to Penang. Dr T A Paraman headed the second surgical unit in Kuala Lumpur, Dr K A Menon served first in Ipoh. Dr Peter Vanniasingam also served a short time in Ipoh before doing many years of services in Penang. Dr M Balasegaram was the first surgeon to be posted

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to Kota Bharu in 1960 but was quickly transferred to Seremban in 1961. The first surgeon posted to Sarawak was Dr M B R Roberts (Sr) in 1955. Dr C J Cumming Smith began a long and illustrious surgical career in Sarawak in 1958. Another bright surgical light was Sir James Fraser who was posted to Sibiu. He later became the President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. Dr Khushru Metha was the first surgeon to serve in Sabah, beginning in 1951. The second surgeon in Sabah was Dr John Michael Donovan Crook. He served in Tawau from 1965, then moved to Kota Kinabalu in 1967 and stayed till 1983.

Up till the Second World War, orthopaedic surgery was the province of general surgeons. In 1949, Dr J A P Cameron who had obtained a Masters in Orthopaedics from the University of Liverpool in 1938 was posted to the Kuala Lumpur Hospital. He established the longstanding tradition of Malaysians going for training leading in Liverpool leading to the MChOrth. He also founded Orthopaedic Surgery as a separate department in the major hospitals. The first local doctor to tread that path was Dr Abdul Majid Ismail. He obtained his Fellowship from Edinburgh after a stint from 1953 to 1955 after which he returned to Seremban Hospital as a general surgeon. In 1957, he went to Liverpool and obtained his MChOrth. When Dr D Gunn, who was Head of Orthopaedics, left in 1958 to take up the Chair of Orthopaedics in Singapore, Dr A M Ismail took over his position.

THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IS ESTABLISHED

The College of Surgeons of Malaysia can trace its roots to the first council meeting held in the home of Datuk Abdul Majid Ismail on 11th December 1972. The original minutes of the meeting are still with us. There were fourteen surgeons in attendance and they elected Datuk Dr A M Ismail as President, along with Datuk Dr S M A Alhady as Senior Vice-President; Professor Dr N K Yong, Secretary; Datuk Dr K A Menon, Treasurer; Professor Dr Balasegaram, Editor; Professor Dr Chin Tuck Chiew, Deputy Secretary and Professor G A Sreenevasan, Deputy Treasurer. From the first, the interests of the College were spelt out in the committees formed; post-graduate training, scientific meeting and publication.

They met again on 3rd May 1973 at the Department of Surgery, University of Malaya, to make amendments to the constitution they had been drafting and decided to hold the First General Meeting on 30th June 1973. As many potential Fellows as possible were invited by circulars to all government and private hospitals, the Malaysian Medical Association and insertion of notice in the newspaper. It was also decided to invite the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia and the Malaysian Anaesthetic Society to form Faculties within the College. The Fellows in Dental Surgery had no organisation and agreed to establish a Faculty within the College.

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At the First General Meeting, among matters taken up was that the College would take over the annual A M Ismail Oration and Gold Medal, and the Alhady Prize for the best candidate in the Primary FRCS examination from the Malaysian Association of Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. This precursor of the College testified to the ties and origin of the College.

The early council deliberated and looked into the possibility of raising a College building in the reserve land opposite the Kuala Lumpur Hospital from its early days. The President was able to brief the council about a Cabinet paper that had been prepared by the Ministry of Health of the establishment of the College by an Act of Parliament which would have given it a role in surgical specialist training.

The College successfully organised its first Annual Scientific Meeting on 31st March 1974. It also organised a Combined Surgical Meeting with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in November 1974. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons approached the College to jointly run their General Scientific Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1978, and that has led to a long and fruitful collaboration between both colleges till this day.

By 1976, the land opposite the Kuala Lumpur Hospital, on which the Academies building now stands, was secured. However, in its pursuit of parliamentary

recognition for its role in surgical training, the news was not as encouraging. That role was assigned to the universities instead.

From first being housed in the Department of Surgery in Kuala Lumpur Hospital, then to a space within the Malaysian Medical Association office, the College finally obtained its own space together with the other medical Colleges and the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia in a building at Jalan Folly Barat, Kuala Lumpur. These ties were very close indeed, as all shared the same secretariat, under the most visible face of the Colleges and Academy, Ms Y M Kong.

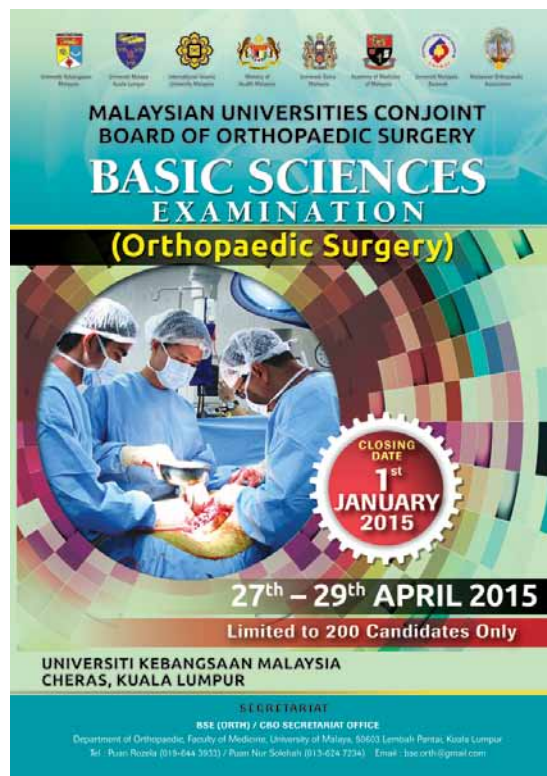
AMALGAMATION OF THE COLLEGE WITH THE ACADEMY

The next big milestone in the College of Surgeons came in the 1990s. The Colleges and the Academy had discussions concerning their roles in the nation and decided that it would be advantageous for all the medical specialties to come under one umbrella body, while each retained its specialty interest. The two largest Colleges, the Physicians and Surgeons, sealed their amalgamation with the Academy in December 1995. All members of the College were absorbed into the Academy. The share of the land that the College of Surgeons had been given jointly with the College of Physician came under the Academy. The plans for the Academies building began in 2003 and the building itself started in 2007.

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Another important development was the National Specialist Register. The Academy had established its specialist register in 1999 which was endorsed by the Ministry of Health as the National Specialist Register in 2006.

Besides its Annual Scientific Meeting, the College ran regular Basic Surgical Skills courses. The College began running its Basic Surgical Science Examination in 2005. Although this examination was a pre-requisite for candidate for post-graduate surgical training, it served as an achievement that the candidate could show in the course of application that would improve his chances for acceptance for training for the Masters of Surgery. The examination has now developed to become recognised as equivalent to the Part 1 examination for training in orthopaedics in our local universities. The College also established a court of examiners in 2008. This was to respond to occasional requests from other Colleges in the region for us to send external examiners. In addition, with the establishment of the Conjoint Board in General Surgery between the universities, the Ministry of Health and the College of Surgeons, our examiners became regular examiners in our local Masters of Surgery examinations. Our collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh has developed. The MRCS Part B OSCE examination was first conducted in Kuala Lumpur in 2014, and Joint Surgical Colleges Fellowship Examination (JSCFE) in General Surgery (between all the surgical colleges of the UK), was conducted in Malaysia for the first time in August 2015.



The College has also taken up adjunct training courses. In January 2010, after two years of ground work, the College held the first Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) course in Malaysia. Both the provider and instructor courses were run in succession to pave the way for future courses to be conducted by our own trainers. To date, over 80 providers have been trained in ATLS. Since 2012, the College has embarked on running the Care of the Critically-Ill Surgical Patient (CCrISP) courses.

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More recently in 2014, the College hosted a Non-technical Skills for Surgeons (NOTSS) course conducted by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The College continues to be a fellowship of surgeons from all institutions where common interests can be pursued. There are countless ways it can serve its members and the people, and it looks forward to as many members as possible stepping up to participate in its future activities.

Compiled by

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