

# Postgraduate training in anaesthesiology in Malaysia – The Past, the Present and the Future

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POSTGRADUATE TRAINING in Anaesthesiology in Malaysia can be considered in 3 phases.

## Phase 1 (before 1965)

From the fifties until 1965, our doctors, choosing the field of Anaesthesiology, were sent on Government-sponsored scholarships to the United Kingdom where they trained, studied and sat for the English and/or Irish Fellowship examinations. Before going abroad, the training and study had to be self-motivated and self-organised. There were no formal, organised study courses in Malaysia then.

## Phase 2 (1965 to 1975)

The Department of Anaesthesiology, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, was established in 1965. The Government continued from 1965 to 1973, to send doctors abroad (i.e. to the United Kingdom and Australia) to finish their training and to attempt the Fellowship examinations. In 1973 the Australasian Primary examination was held for the first time in Kuala Lumpur and the Australasian Final Fellowship examination was held for the first time in 1975, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The stage had arrived whereby our trainee-doctors in Anaesthesiology could be trained, prepared and certified for a postgraduate examination, albeit a foreign qualification, without having to leave the country.

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## Phase 3

The Faculty of Anaesthesiologists, College of Surgeons of Malaysia, was established in April 1975, exactly a year ago.

At this infant stage, plans are being made to organise a curriculum and preparatory courses leading up to postgraduate certification in Anaesthesiology in Malaysia (a local qualification). As it has been shown that we can train locally our doctors to obtain a postgraduate qualification without their having to go abroad, logically, we should aim and organise our own postgraduate certification.

Phase 3 will be elaborated on later after going into more details regarding the present status of Postgraduate training in Anaesthesiology in Malaysia.

## Current Status and Training

Today there are 36 qualified anaesthesiologists in the country holding recognized postgraduate Fellowships (i.e. English, Irish or Australasian).

## Distribution of qualified Anaesthesiologists in Malaysia

	<i>Number</i>
Total (1975)	36
Employed in 11 Government General Hospitals	17
(1 Anaesthesiologist per hospital in each of the 11 different States; 6 Anaesthesiologists in the Government Hospital in Kuala Lumpur).	
Employed in University Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.	6

In Private Practice 13  
 (in 3 different towns – 8 in Kuala Lumpur  
 – 3 in Penang  
 – 2 in Ipoh)

The training in Government General Hospitals is hampered by the tremendous service load and shortage of personnel and is consequently variable according to the enthusiasm and efforts of the individual consultant anaesthesiologist in each hospital. Excluding the Government Hospital in Kuala Lumpur, the General Hospital in each State has one qualified Anaesthesiologist. On the average for every 1000 beds, 8000 anaesthetics (general and regional) are required annually; most of these hospitals have 2–4 trainee-doctors to assist the consultant in the running of the anaesthetic service. Obviously very little examination preparation by way of formal, organised lectures/tutorials/discussions is possible. Time-off for study is non-existent. Training is basically by example.

To elaborate on Phase 3 (the future), the Faculty of Anaesthesiologists, College of Surgeons of Malaysia, has recommended an Exchange Scheme whereby trainee-doctors in the Government hospitals should be sent to the University Hospital, in Kuala Lumpur, for a period (6 months) prior to an available postgraduate examination to give him an opportunity to prepare for the examination away from the environment of overwhelming anaesthetic-service. The environment in the University Hospital is obviously more conducive and tuned toward training and examinations; the service commitment is less, organised lectures/tutorials/discussions are being conducted, and library and reading facilities are excellent. The Department of Anaesthesiology, University of Malaya is functionally examination- and academically-orientated.

The Exchange Scheme recommends that the University trainee-doctor be sent out to a Government General Hospital as a replacement after he has passed the Primary (Basic Sciences) examination. The experience gained by the University doctor in the busy, predominantly service-orientated, Government hospital will be of benefit for the Final examination. The experience will also expose the University trainee-doctor to the conditions and requirements of anaesthesia pertinent to those prevailing in the country. He will be the richer for such an experience and will be a more useful anaesthesiologist in fulfilling the needs of the country.

As far as Postgraduate Certification in Anaesthesiology in Malaysia is concerned, our Faculty is planning and working toward the following format:-

### Proposed Postgraduate Certification in Anaesthesiology in Malaysia

4 year training period – Medical Officer  
 (including 1 year of non-anaesthetic experience)

<i>Examination</i>	<i>Method of Assessment</i>
I. <i>Preliminary Examination</i> (after 1 year of anaesthetic practice)	Viva-voce
II. <i>Primary Examination</i> (Basic Sciences – Physiology (including clinical measurements and physical concepts) – Pharmacology (including elementary statistics)	Essay-type and multiple choice papers + viva-voce
III. <i>Final Examination</i> (Theory and Practice of Anaesthesia, related clinical medicine/surgery/anatomy, clinical measurements)	Essay-type and multiple-choice papers + viva-voce in medicine (Clinical cases)

Anaesthesiology in the developing country of Malaysia is evolving. We have reached a stage of development beyond which we must tread with much care, thought and planning. Our further steps will have crucial bearings, particularly, on the future of postgraduate training and certification in Anaesthesiology in our country. Our Faculty is hopeful that the path chosen will be of benefit to the needs of the country.

The main purpose of presenting this paper lies in the hope that our more-experienced colleagues in other parts of the world will help and guide us in establishing training and certifying examinations which are relevant to the needs of our country and of a universally acceptable standard.

### Summary

The history of the training of Anaesthesiologists in Malaysia is traced. Eleven multi-disciplined hospitals, located in different parts of the country and administered by different authorities, conduct training courses in Anaesthesiology. A Faculty of Anaesthesiologists was established in April 1975 to co-ordinate activities and facilities for the training of Anaesthesiologists in Malaysia. The objects of training, the curriculum, the method of assessment and examination and the role of the Anaesthesiologist in Malaysia are presented for information and discussion.