

# Elective Report

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## *1. What are the prevalent surgical conditions in Malaysia? How do they differ from the UK?*

Malaysia's population currently stands at over 26 million of which a high percentage have several risk factors for cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease. Risk factors such as hypertension affects 25.7% of the population, hypercholesterolaemia affects 53.5% of the population and 11% have Diabetes. The most common emergency presentations are vascular events needing treatment in the hospital. Eventually these patients require coronary artery bypass grafts when angioplasty has failed.

Surgical conditions present in Malaysia are very similar to those in the UK; however there is an increased incidence of gastrointestinal cancers such as stomach cancer as well as trauma surgery due to the increased incidence of road traffic accidents. Although in comparison to the UK, Stomach Cancer has a higher incidence in Malaysia, it is still much lower than Japan and China according to the Malaysian Cancer Registry.<sup>1</sup>

## *2. How are surgical services organised and delivered? How does this differ from the UK?*

Malaysian healthcare currently is very similar to the United Kingdom especially in its organisational structure of services. For example the main port of call for all patients in need of medical attention is either their general practitioner or the accident and emergency department. Malaysia spends a mere 4.5% of its GDP on its healthcare system compared to the UK's 8.4% of GDP. Despite still being classed as a developing country with a population of 26 million it has managed to produce one of the leading healthcare systems in Asia. It is currently providing free healthcare to all Malaysian citizens and is striving to do the same for its immigrant population. Healthcare for those located in urban areas is very much more effective and more easily accessible than for those in rural areas.

Surgical services are provided in a similar fashion to that in the UK, where a patient with an urgent surgical condition is seen usually within Accident and Emergency and taken under the care of surgeons. A long term problem would be referred by general practitioners for surgical investigation, review and treatment. Due to a now striving private healthcare sector that works alongside the public system, members of the public who can afford private healthcare will tend to use it. Malaysian government feels that by encouraging the private healthcare system, the burden upon the public system will reduce and thus allow a better service to members of the population who cannot afford private healthcare.

## *3. Describe the common infections that present in Malaysia. Describe public health measures associated with infective diseases.*

As a country based in the tropics, Malaysia has a high prevalence of infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, measles and leprosy. According to World Health Organisation in 2009, 27468 people were diagnosed with Malaria. The government has implemented various interventions and strategies, including free distribution of insecticide treated nets to all age groups as well as indoor residual spraying of DDT to reduce mosquitoes infecting the population with *P. Falciparum*. Eliminating malaria in most of Malaysia has been quite effective but Sarawak and Sabah currently have the highest prevalence. Although the total malaria cases in the country are on the decrease the

diagnosed indigenous cases are currently rising. Nearly 24 million US\$ are spent to reduce the number of cases of malaria in the country.<sup>ii</sup> In comparison to the UK there are insignificant cases of malaria, this is due to the fact that mosquitoes do not thrive in the UK as the climate is too cold. The cases that are reported are from travellers who have come back from foreign travel.

The prevalence of Tuberculosis in 2009 was 110 per 100,000 population. Although the incidence of tuberculosis is slowing decreasing, it is still of concern especially with the number of cases occurring with HIV positive patients having a prevalence of 83 per 100,000 population in 2008. The government's initiative to ensure a decrease in the incidence of Tuberculosis is with adequate vaccination of children with nearly 98% of children aged one who are now vaccinated.

The prevalence of HIV in 2009 was 0.5% and as stated earlier this does have an impact on the need for healthcare services when needing to diagnose and treat other infectious diseases that are more prone in HIV patients. In 2001, the Johor State religious department introduced the premarital HIV screening for couples wanting to marry. This has now become policy in seven of the Malaysian states, where couples intending to marry undergo screening. Once a positive result is found they are discouraged from marrying. This has also lead to problems such as fake HIV negative certificates entering circulation.<sup>iii</sup> These initiatives have lead to a decrease in new cases of HIV according to the WHO.<sup>iv</sup>

*4. Reflect upon the practice of surgery and medicine in Malaysia and state two practices you can incorporate in your own practice as a doctor.*

Having shadowed the surgical trauma team and those working in the emergency department of the Hospital of Kuala Lumpur, I gained a vast amount of understanding of what it really means to be a doctor in the developing world, where population numbers are high and resources are in low supply. Shadowing one particular doctor, I learnt a great deal about remaining calm even when inundated with patients to see and jobs to do. The doctor simply wrote all the jobs down and went to a quiet corner of the room sat for 2 minutes having a "breather". He felt that by doing this he was able to gather his thoughts and able to tackle all the issues in a calmer manner, rather than frantically running around. I hope to incorporate this into my own practice as a doctor especially when I am on call. Overall my elective in Malaysia was an eye opener into how effectively doctors can cope with limited resources and large patient demands.

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<sup>i</sup> K G Lim. Malays in Peninsular Malaysia may have the Lowest Incidence of Stomach Cancer in the World. Med J Malaysia Vol 64 No 1 March 2009

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.who.int/malaria/publications/country-profiles/profile\\_mys\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/malaria/publications/country-profiles/profile_mys_en.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/law/articles\\_publications/publications/womenhiv\\_20080730/womenhiv\\_20080730.pdf](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/law/articles_publications/publications/womenhiv_20080730/womenhiv_20080730.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> World Health Organisation. Malaysia Tuberculosis Profile 2009. Accessed ONLINE [https://extranet.who.int/sree/Reports?op=Replet&name=/WHO\\_HQ\\_Reports/G2/PROD/EXT/TBCountryProfile&ISO2=MY&outtype=html](https://extranet.who.int/sree/Reports?op=Replet&name=/WHO_HQ_Reports/G2/PROD/EXT/TBCountryProfile&ISO2=MY&outtype=html)