

Brunei International Medical Journal: Future directions

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*"The important thing is not to stop questioning.
Curiosity has its own reason for existing."*

Albert Einstein

INTRODUCTION

Research is very important and is an integral part of any profession, including the health care professions. Albert Einstein once said "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." Through research, we learn and understand the epidemiology, natural history and the underlying pathogenesis of any medical disorder. This knowledge gained will allow us to formulate and devise appropriate and cost-effective management strategies. All these research findings need to be disseminated to the wider healthcare communities and this is usually done through media like medical journals which can be general or specialised. The Brunei International Medical Journal (BIMJ) was established with these aims. In addition, the BIMJ also hopes to promote and encourage research in Brunei Darussalam.¹

CURRENT RESEARCH STATUS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Compared to the other ASEAN countries like

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Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, research in Brunei Darussalam is still in its infancy. However, it is hoped that this situation will improve, especially with the establishment of the Medical Health Research and Ethic Committee (MHREC) and the Clinical Research Unit (CRU), Ministry of Health based in RIPAS Hospital. These two units have been established with the aim to promote, assist and regulate research that is being carried in our local setting. These will ensure that research that comes out of Brunei Darussalam is of a high standard and comparable to established centers and is acceptable for publication in both reputable journals both regionally and internationally.

Research is continuously being carried out in our local setting. A review of the work that was presented in the previous Annual Academic Sessions, organised by the Pengiran Anak Puteri Rashidah Sa'adatul Bolkiah (PAPRSB) Institute of Health Sciences (formerly known as the Institute of Medicine), Universiti Brunei Darussalam and the Annual Surgical Forum, organised by the Department of Surgery, RIPAS Hospital, showed that there

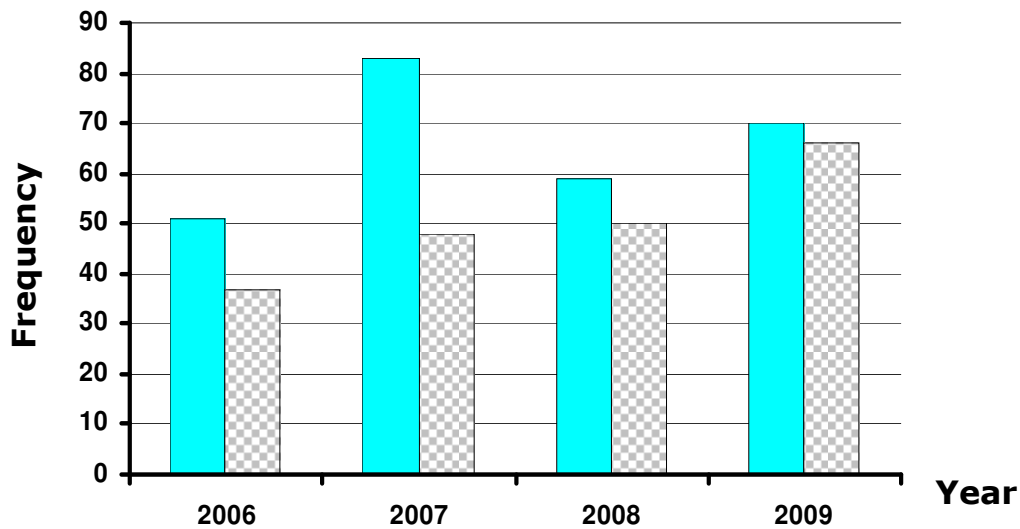


Figure: The number of research projects presented by contributors that consisted of work done locally and regional/international in the Annual Academic Sessions and the Surgical Forum. ■ Total number of works presented and ■ works done locally.

is a considerable amount of quality research being carried out.²⁻⁸ Of the total number of works presented, the majority were from our local researchers based on work done locally. Importantly, the overall number of work done locally is increasing. In addition to these two meetings, there are other meetings that are being held in Brunei Darussalam: a) the Malaysia Indonesia Brunei (MIB) Medical Sciences Conferences, an annual meeting that rotates between the three countries and is being held in Brunei Darussalam this year (6th MIB, 21st-23rd July 2010) and b) the Asean Conference of Clinical Laboratory Scientists that was last held in Brunei Darussalam in 2008.⁹

Encouragingly, some of these works have already been published in both local and regional/international journals. This is a testament that research works produced in our local setting are of acceptable quality and standard. Some of these publications are highlighted in the 'Brunei Darussalam Elsewhere' section of the journal, a section that has been introduced to showcase the work

done by our local researchers.

In the last few years, there have been many positive developments in the training curriculums both within the Ministry of Health and the PAPRSB Institute of Health Sciences where research is being included as part of curriculum requirements. The curriculum in the PAPRSB Institute of Health Sciences (second and third year) requires medical students to carry out research projects and similarly, pre-registrations house officers working with the Ministry of Health are also required to carry our research projects. Hopefully, these will instil a research culture among both our junior and senior doctors.

ROLE OF BIMJ IN PROMOTING RESEARCH

The major role of the BIMJ is to provide an avenue for local researchers to publish their research findings, therefore, disseminating important information to the other health care workers. It will also allow the Ministry of Health to have more credible information on medical matters in Brunei Darussalam. The

other local medical journal, the Brunei Darussalam Journal of Health, published by the PAPRSB Institute of Health Sciences is the alternative avenue for publication. This journal is currently published annually and is also available online at the UBD website (<http://www.ubd.edu.bn/academic/journal/im/index.html>).

Apart from provision of an avenue for publication, continued encouragement and support must also be provided and maintained to all researchers, both new or established alike to continue to carry out their important works. Currently, the Ministry of Health, PAPRSB Institute of Health Sciences (UBD) and the CRU have planned to organise research workshops at regular intervals. These will allow potential researchers to learn how to carry out proper research, presentations and how to effectively write up their works for publications.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Apart from promoting research and providing an avenue for publications, the future direction of the BIMJ is one of increasing exposure of the research done in Brunei Darussalam to our overseas healthcare counterparts, both regionally and internationally.

Beginning with the current issue, additional sections have been added and these include the '*Special Report*', '*Audits*' and '*Technical or Innovative*' and '*Education*' section. It also includes '*Images of Interest*' which is becoming ever popular even in established journals. The journal will also be available online from the journal and CRU website (www.bimjonline.com). The presentation of the website is similar to what is avail-

able in many other established journals websites. Contributors can also submit their manuscripts electronically via email and this will make manuscripts processing easier and faster. More importantly, the contents of the journal will also be freely available, similar to the currently popular 'Open access' platform which is shown to be associated with a wide readership.

One of the immediate aims of CRU is to get the BIMJ indexed in databases such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) Western Pacific Region Index Medicus (WPRIM), Google Scholar, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and ultimately Medline or PubMed where maximum exposure can be achieved. In order to achieve this ultimate goal, the CRU and the panel of Editorial board members, including the distinguished invited International panel will continue to strive to ensure publications of a high standard and at regular intervals. Therefore, as stated in the 'Instructions to the authors' section, we hope that all BIMJ contributors will agree that in some cases, editorial assistance or changes with submitted manuscripts may be required to improve the presentations and contents of the publications.

Hopefully, together with the online platform, a face-lifted print version of the journal coupled with publications of high standards, these goals can be achieved. We also aim to increase the frequency of publication. It is also hoped that the journal will also attract external contributions from regional and even international research centers. All parties involved including the editorial board members, CRU, MHREC and contributors will have to work closely with each other as the

success of the journal is dependent upon their close collaborations.

For all of us who are working in the health care professions, just like any other professions, we should not stop asking questions. In fact, research is a process of asking questions and trying to find the answers. The more questions we ask, the more we learn and in our line of work, this is very important. Everyday, we face different patients and situations and some may be new and others may be different. We need to know how to deal with these situations appropriately and effectively.

We need research for many reasons. Things that we know to be true today may not be tomorrow. With the changing population demographics, we are seeing more chronic diseases (i.e. obesity, diabetes mellitus and heart diseases) of the affluent that were uncommon in the past. Therefore, the epidemiology, natural history, disease manifestations and management strategies may also change. What is valid in other countries may not be valid in our local setting due to population differences. On-going research will also allow us to monitor any changes in the trend of medical disorders. Last but not least, you can actually learn quite a lot by doing research, even a simple research that may seem insignificant at times to others.

With the current era of evidence-based medicine, research is particularly important. Asking questions is good and curiosity do have its purpose. However, in research, you have to remember to ask the appropriate questions and you always need to plan your research carefully from the very beginning so

that answers obtained are valid and accurate. Research may not be easy and seem like a daunting task, but with proper guidance and practice, these obstacles can be overcome.

Finally, like any other things, setbacks are sometimes inevitable. With dedications and hard work, all these setbacks can be overcome. For those interested in research, the CRU will always be there and happy to provide assistance and guidance to make your research fruitful. Working together, we can make the future bright.

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- 3:** Institute of Medicine. 2nd Annual Academic Sessions 'Cultivating Research Talents through Interdisciplinary Collaborations' 10th-11th March 2007.
- 4:** Institute of Medicine. 3rd Annual Academic Sessions 'Promoting Research in Health Sciences' 9th March 2008.
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- 6:** 1st Annual Brunei Surgical Scientific Session in conjunction with 4th Surgical Forum-Management of the trauma patient-working towards a better survival'. 9th September 2007.
- 7:** 2nd Annual Brunei Surgical Scientific Session in conjunction with 5th Surgical Forum-Changing trend in surgical practice. 30th November 2008.
- 8:** 3rd Annual Brunei Surgical Scientific Session in conjunction with 6th Surgical Forum-Controversies in Surgery. 6th December 2009.
- 9:** 12th Asean Conference of Clinical Laboratory Scientists-Striving for excellence in laboratory practice. 22nd-24th August 2008.