

Healthcare in Brunei Darussalam: Temporary hospitals after the Second World War



Temporary hospital used after the Second World War

After the destruction of the Pekan Brunei Hospital in 1944 by Allied bombing during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War, there was no immediate replacement facility for healthcare provisions. The Government Servant's quarters which consisted of individual small houses (located in the lot beside the building housing the Ministry of Home Affairs in Bandar Seri Begawan) were used as the temporary hospital. * These were used until an alternative building was identified. In 1947, the temporary hospital was shifted to the large house that had belonged to Pehin Orang Kaya Digadong Seri Diraja Dato Laila Utama Hj Awang Mohd Yusof, located in the Sumbiling area near the compound where the Brunei General Hospital was later built.

This house was a two storey wooden house that had four rooms. This temporary hospital had 22 beds, two in the first class ward and the remaining 20 in the general wards. The general wards were located both upstairs and downstairs. There was also an operating room located in front and an administration room on the far side. As the previous hospital equipment were damaged or destroyed by the bombing, the temporary hospital

was furnished with whatever equipment that were left behind by the Australian Arm Forces after the Second World War. This hospital was manned by dressers and a doctor (Dr WG Toole and later Dr GA Mott). As the requirement for healthcare service increased during the rebuilding of Pekan Brunei, additional small wooden huts were built in the compound to accommodate the increasing number of patients. The temporary hospital was also equipped with a laboratory. First hand account from a Dresser (Chin Yun Sang) revealed that the temporary hospital was adequate and in-patient cases consisted mainly of fever disorders.

To compound to the destruction of the healthcare facility in Pekan Brunei, there was also shortage of medicines, medical accessories and food. Then, it was considered a dreadful time for the residents of Brunei. The hospitals in the Tutong and Kuala Belait districts were also damaged or destroyed. The British Malayan Petroleum Company (BMPC) owned hospital located in Kuala Belait was fortunately not damaged by the war and continued to provide healthcare services to the population of that district.

* Based on interviews with Mr Han King Juan who had received treatment in the temporary hospitals and Mr Chin Yun Sang