

ACCREDITATION OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS

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I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to address the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) Accreditation Seminar today. Let me first congratulate The Joint Technical Committee of The Malaysian Medical Council and The Ministry of Health for making it possible for us to have this seminar.

As some of you may recall, several similar courses and conferences were held in the past, the last being in 2007. This course is held in response to the inevitability of accreditation as a means of ensuring quality in medical education that meets reasonable and appropriate national standards.

We are fortunate to be here today to attend this special course that will guide us through the accreditation of medical undergraduate degree programmes. However we are unfortunate that our president could not be with us today due to unforeseen circumstances.

Recently the Malaysian public has become more aware of their rights to receive quality health care and are more informed in today's IT savvy society. Thus the public has become more vocal about equity, safety, efficacy and appropriateness of care. Hence the importance of accreditation of medical programmes to ensure that medical graduates can and will provide the level of healthcare expected by the public.

The participants today include representatives from institutions of higher learning, both public and private. We have also invited participants from Ministry of Health Malaysia Hospitals due to the importance they play in the training of medical students. The hospitals also need to be aware of the rights given to them in providing this training. Not least, we have also invited various government bodies and agencies to participate in this seminar. I would also like to welcome members of the MMC who I believe will be able to provide valuable insight into the discussions.

We also have the honour of having some experienced speakers with us, Prof Dato' Dr Mafauzy Mohamed, Prof Datuk Dr Abdul Razzak Mohd Said and Puan Halinordina Mat Saat. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for taking their time off from their busy schedules to be with us in this seminar.

In recent years, the number of medical schools, and the programmes they offer have increased exponentially. It is a challenge for the governing bodies to keep track of them and the quality of education they provide. As a result, we are facing a lack of trained accreditors to participate as panel members in evaluation visits and the current pool is sorely stretched with visits needing to be conducted almost every month. As such, it is also the purpose of this seminar to train future accreditors to ensure proper assessment of medical programmes.

With the Cabinet having issued a directive for the MMC to review all 375 recognized medical institutions throughout the world listed in the 2nd Schedule of the Medical Act, the need to increase the pool of accreditors to complete this massive undertaking has increased tenfold.

Through accreditation, medical schools are made accountable to train safe and qualified medical graduates who have had sufficient and valid educational experience appropriate for the needs of the Malaysian public.

The standards developed for accreditation which includes objectives, governance, administration, educational programmes, medical students and resources for medical programme are used to constitute the necessary environment for medical students to learn the practice of medicine. As well as meeting the local, regional and national needs for patient services.

Allow me to remind you some of the crucial features which form the pillars of accreditation.

The first among these is accreditation should always be voluntary in nature. Visits are only made to medical training institutions upon request. Being voluntary in nature, an accreditation exercise of a particular institute requires their full cooperation.

Another important aspect is the involvement of the medical practitioners and academicians from various disciplines to produce a credible report. They will be the best ones to assess a medical course and to establish standards with multidisciplinary consensus.

Accreditation should be regarded as an educational process to both the participating institutions, through self-review or assessment and the visiting team of peers, with consultation and formal feedback. There should also be a supportive network for participation and systematic follow-up.

Finally, it is important to note here that even after granting accreditation, the Council has the authority to withdraw it if any institution fails to conform to the requirements set forthwith. Hence, there should be a mechanism within the institution not only to maintain accreditation, but more pertinently, to continuously self-improve and sustain it.

Ultimately, it is envisaged the institutions' relentless efforts in accreditation will earn them international recognition

I firmly believe that we need to develop a culture where medical schools voluntarily submit to accreditation through their awareness of their responsibility in producing doctors who are competent and responsible to provide good health care, as well as to ensure that the health services the public receive are safe and cost effective. I am sure that you can see the importance of the accreditors' role in ensuring that the best level of health care is maintained in this country. It is my hope that this course will stimulate our medical schools to develop quality medical programmes for the good of all.