

Anesthesiologi

- Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists
- College of Anaesthesiologists, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia

ADDENDUM

Parallel Pathway Training of the College of Anaesthesiologists, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia in collaboration with the College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland (CAI)

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Postgraduate anaesthesia training has evolved over the years. Most of our younger generation of anaesthesiologists probably would not know in detail the history of how it all started in Malaysia more than 50 years ago. In the early years, doctors were sent for training in overseas hospitals in the UK and Ireland and subsequently enrolled in fellowship programmes over there such as the FFARCS and the FFARCSI. We then evolved to have our own Masters of Anaesthesiology programme beginning in 1984 in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and subsequently in 1987, the pioneer batch of postgraduate students from the Ministry of Health Malaysia entered into the training programme of both the Univeristy of Malaya and the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia as a conjoint examination. At the same time, candidates were also sitting for overseas examinations here such as the Fellowship of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (FANZCA) and Master of Medicine (Anaesthesiology) Singapore.

However, with time, we realised that our local Masters programme might not have provided adequate places for training candidates (although we now have five universities offering postgraduate programme) and as such we have had to embark on various avenues for training opportunities for our next generation of anaesthesiologists. Among these initiatives is the parallel programme that is being done with College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland (CAI).

To understand the background of the programme and some questions raised, let us see how it all began. Back in 2011, the then President of College, Associate Professor Dr Norsidah Manap visited Perdana University - Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (PU-RCSI) in Serdang, Selangor at the invitation of Professor Dr Anthony J Cunningham, the Dean of PU-RCSI School of Medicine. Professor Dr Cunningham was also an anaesthesiologist

by profession. During the visit, they met Dr Jeanne Moriarty (then President of the CAI) and Mr Fintan Foy (then CEO of the CAI). It was the beginning of a series of discussions and engagements with the hope that both parties could collaborate in various aspects such as educational and training programmes.

Out of the blue, sometime in April 2012, we received news that the ANZCA training programme would be withdrawn from South-East Asia (Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore). This coincided with the implementation of a major change to its curriculum in 2013. The ANZCA also clarified that it originally offered its training programme in South-East Asia in order to support nations without specialist training programmes but recognised that all these three countries have already developed world-class training programmes. As such, trainees registering from 2012 onwards would not have any parts of their training recognised if done locally and have to be trained in Australia or New Zealand for the whole programme. This was rather sudden news and the CoA then decided that it would have to explore other ways of working together for training attachments and reciprocal recognition with ANZCA and other bodies.

Interestingly, at about the same time, the CAI started conducting their primary MCQ examinations in Malaysia. The CoA then decided to explore the possibility of future collaboration and training recognition with the CAI.

In view of the limited funding that the CoA had at that point in time, the CoA Council realised that we will not be able to be fully functional as the "academic arm" independently like our counterparts in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland. Firstly, we lacked full time employees as all the council members and academically inclined members were full-time anaesthesiologists with not much time to spare. There was also a lack of permanent or dedicated secretarial staff

to run the show which would need funding and resources. The CoA works closely with the Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists and has limited access to funds for educational purposes. The CoA only plays a supportive role in the postgraduate Masters in Anaesthesiology programme as it is run by the Universities (UKM, UM, USM, UPM, UIA, etc). Nevertheless, as an independent body, we are still involved in ensuring the programmes are thoroughly accredited, especially under the auspices of the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia who plays an advocacy role in overseeing the training and certification of medical specialties and subspecialties.

As such, following on the work of the previous President, in 2013, Datin Dr V Sivasakthi who became the President of CoA. went to Dublin, Ireland to explore the possibility of linking up with the CAI to provide an alternative institution for our local doctors to do their postgraduate studies. As a result of this series of discussions with the main focus on recognition in Malaysia, the CAI agreed to allow our candidates to take the exams and also to undergo training from within recognised hospitals in Malaysia.

The Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) then endorsed this alternative pathway to produce more specialists in the future. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 27th April 2016 between the CAI and the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia during the Presidentship of Dr Sushila Sivasubramaniam in the presence of the then Minister of Health, the Honourable Datuk Seri Dr S Subramaniam, and the Director-General of Health Malaysia, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah. The initial MoU was for five years and to be reviewed at the end of the fourth year to consider extension and strengthening as appropriate. Of note here is that the parallel pathway can only be conducted via the CoA while the role of the MOH is to provide a place for training.

The hard work was continued by Dr Sushila and followed by Dr Raveenthiran Rasiah when the College hosted the CAI officials on various occasions when the team came to Malaysia for the accreditation of Malaysian hospitals for recognition of training.

As planned, upon passing the MCAI, the candidate must inform the MOH and the CoA and make a request for transfer to a Regional Training Hospital. Upon passing the FCAI, transfer will be made to an Accredited Hospital for Year 4-6 competency training (a structured three-year competency training programme). During these three years, trainees will undergo clinical rotations in subspecialty anaesthesia and formal In-Training Assessments of the Parallel Pathway Training Programme. They are expected to record their clinical practice and academic activities in logbook, undertake a research project and attend recommended courses. Progression through these three years will depend upon achieving essential clinical competencies, success in In-Training Viva Assessments, and satisfactory formal Supervisor Reports by appointed Supervisors of Training and Head of Departments.

When Dato Dr Jahizah Hassan became President of the CoA, being the National Head of Anaesthesia Service then as well, the training requirements were further fortified to ensure that a formal review will take place which will then lead to the recommendation for Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) and gazettement as a Specialist in Anaesthesiology in Malaysia and subsequent registration in the National Specialist Register. As a result of this, the FCAI programme upon completion of the CCT was to be a similar duration of training to our Masters programme. In Ireland those who have passed the FCAI exams will need to undergo CCT training as well before they are allowed to practise as specialists. The FCAI should not be mistaken as an exit examination. Dato Dr Jahizah also made certain that our local academicians representing the CoA who were products of the Masters programme were included as the panel of examiners for the programme. This ensured that the FCAI programme would produce specialists on par to our Masters programme.

In 2019, we had our first graduate of the FCAI Parallel Pathway Programme. The Collegians were exceptionally pleased that hard work over a period of seven years by various presidents and council members produced a comprehensive structured training programme to ensure training standards and competency are equivalent to our Masters programme.

At the moment, the registration fee is RM5,000 to be paid to the CoA comprising first year fee at RM2,000 and subsequently RM1000 per year for the next three years. There is no fee to be paid to the CoA for the commencement of the CCT portion of the training. We wanted to keep the fees as affordable as possible and at the same time hope that based on the above account as well as for our future viability of this programme, the registration fee as stated above will be viewed favourably. The CoA will continue to support as much as possible all efforts to sustain the programme such as maintenance of a dedicated website to disseminate information, overseeing training, drafting the curriculum, monitoring of trainees, mentoring, setting standards of training and the maintenance of competence and professionalism. Even during this pandemic, we conducted post FCAI assessment for three candidates from Penang virtually. We will definitely work towards enabling successful short courses such as "Training of the trainers, Training of the trainees and Anaesthesia Parallel Pathway training workshop" to be continued when the time allows in the near future hopefully.

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