

Healthcare Pioneers: Chin Yam Chin



Doctor Chin is the first local dental surgeon in Brunei Darussalam. He joined the Health Service in 1965 and at that time, there were two dental officers, both from Singapore.

Dr Chin graduated with a Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree (DDS) from the renowned National Tokyo Medical and Dental University, Japan in 1964. In fact, he is probably the first Bruneian who has studied and graduated from the Land of the Rising Sun. Dr Chin knew from the beginning that his interest was in dentistry. He chose to study in Japan as he was very impressed with their work ethics. After seeing an advertisement in the Chinese Singapore newspaper, Dr Chin travelled to Singapore to the Japanese Embassy to make enquiries. At that time to travel to Japan, Dr Chin boarded a cargo ship via Labuan that sailed to Singapore before sailing back to Miri, Manila, Hong Kong and then Yokohama. That journey took three weeks. Dr Chin spent a year of intensive language course in Japanese before he could sit for the entrance examination. He later enrolled into the Dental and Medical programme of the National Tokyo Medical and

Dental University. Dr Chin was unaware his tuition fee was fully sponsored by the Japanese government until approximately two years into the programme.

After joining the Brunei Service, Dr Chin was offered a postgraduate scholarship and subsequently completed a Masters' degree in the United Kingdom. Upon his return in 1972, Dr Chin was made head of Dental Services. He modernised the services by introducing modern equipment such as hydraulic dental chairs and other equipment. He also introduced single use needles. Dr Chin made regular visits to the dental clinics in the other districts. He also promoted the roles of dental nurses. Dental nurses were trained and were allowed to deliver clinical services such as dental extractions, a position now commonly referred to as nurse practitioners. Apart from his official duties, Dr Chin also rendered his services as a translator for the Japanese Embassy and remains active as the President of the Brunei Association of Japan Alumni. Dr Chin retired from the Health Service in 1986 and opened a dental clinic and remains active to this day.

Guest editor: Dato Samuel Yapp Kai San (Senior Consultant Surgeon, RIPAS Hospital).

Based on interviews with Dr Chin Yam Chin conducted after Tuesdays CME meetings.