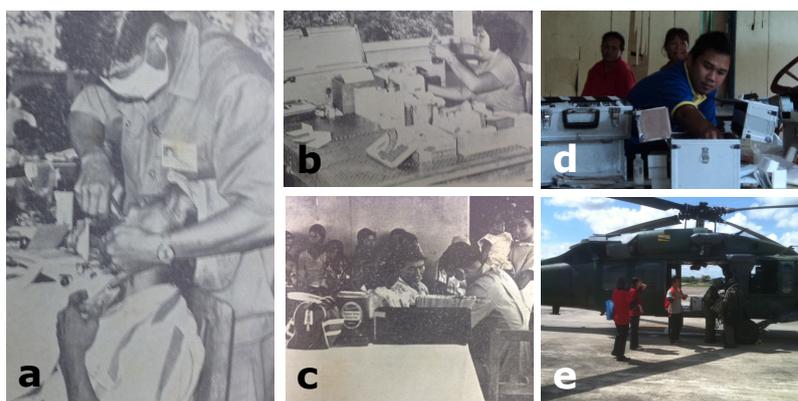


Healthcare Pioneers: The people behind the Flying Doctor Service



a) Mr Yapp performing a dental extraction, b) an assistant nurse dispensing medication, c) Mr Yapp attending to a patient, d) Awang Azreen in the Sukang Clinic and e) the Flying Medical Service team at the Army Base.

The people involved with the Flying Doctor Service have played an important part in the history of healthcare of Brunei Darussalam, in particular for the remote areas. The team consisted of a doctor, Nurse-in-Charge, a nurse from the Mother and Child Service and in the later part, a pharmacist or dispenser and a dentist. Despite its name, it was not until 1998 that the service became a doctor led service again. Dr Fitzpatrick led the service until his death, and Mr Yapp Khai Khoon (*BIMJ* 2013; 9 (3):155), a dresser/hospital assistant was then given charge of the service until his retirement in 1998.

The lead person of the service is the Nurse-in-Charge and Mr Yapp was the first such person. Since his retirement, this role had been held by several staff from the Community Healthcare Service (Hj Asmadi Bin Abdullah, Hj Suhaimi Bin Hj Serail, Eddy Kenneddy, and Hj Marsallehan Bin Omar) and is currently under the charge of Awang Azreen Bin Hj Besar, a staff nurse from Bunut Health Centre. The Nurse-in-Charge is responsible for preparing for every visits; informing the rostered personnel of the schedule and getting the

necessities ready. When a pharmacist/dispenser is not rostered for a visit, the Nurse-in-charge does the dispensing and also provides other services such as wound dressing, simple procedures such as incision and drainage under local anaesthetic, counseling and educational to patients and the villagers. A nurse from the Mother and Child Health Service, working in a three month rotation looks after the welfare of expectant mothers and provides post-natal care. They also deliver vaccination services.

Throughout the history of the service, many healthcare personnel have been involved. In the earlier part when the remote areas were largely unknown, some nurses had joined the service to see the people living longhouses, as one such nurse recalled. On her only trip, it had rained heavily and they had to jump several feet on to a grassland as the helicopter could not land safely. Apart from healthcare professionals, the Royal Brunei Air Force has been the backbone of the service. Overall, people involved in the service must have certain characteristics and including nerves of steel and no fear of flying.

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

Source: Interview with Awang Azreen Bin Hj Besar (Nurse in Charge of the Flying Medical Service)