

Penyampai : DATO SERI DR SITI HASMAH BT HAJI MOHD ALI
Tajuk : MAJLIS PERASMIAN PERSIDANGAN DERMATOLOGI SERANTAU
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Saya berasa amat gembira kerana dijemput merasmikan Persidangan Dermatologi Serantau (Asia - Australasia) ke- 14. Persidangan dua tahun sekali ini adalah forum terbesar dan terpenting dalam bidang dermatologi di rantau Asia pada tahun 2000 ini. Persidangan ini juga membolehkan perbincangan serta menggalakkan persefahaman diantara para pakar, doktor, pelatih, jururawat dan paramedik yang terlibat dalam bidang dermatologi di dalam Malaysia serta di negara-negara lain.

2. I would like to thank the Dermatological Society of Malaysia for inviting me to address this distinguished audience and to welcome all of you to this conference and to Malaysia. I am sure you will also be able to find some time to visit Kuala Lumpur and some of the other interesting places in Malaysia.

3. The rapid socio-economic development in Malaysia has been accompanied by a parallel improvement and an increase in the facilities for international level conferences. Indeed, Kuala Lumpur is clearly a favourite choice of venue among conference organisers and Malaysia is proud to play host to this regional conference once again. Delegates will remember with nostalgia the success of the Fourth Regional Conference held in Penang in 1980 followed by an equally successful Ninth Conference in Kuala Lumpur in 1990. I do hope that when you return to your respective countries next week, you will also bring home similar fond memories of the Fourteenth Regional Conference and of Malaysia.

4. The theme of this Regional Conference, "Dermatology the next millennium" is very appropriate as we move into the 21st century. Indeed like all other medical specialties, dermatologists will have to respond to the rapid development in medical sciences over the past decade. We shall see an increasing importance in genetic and molecular research and discovery in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases. I note that this area has been given special importance in this conference. I am confident that new medications and technologies will soon come to the rescue of patients with chronic dermatological diseases like psoriasis, epidermolysis bullosa and even the common skin allergies.

5. The Government of Malaysia has taken great pains to improve and to increase the provision of dermatological services to the people. There is still a major shortage of specialists in this discipline. Hence, the training of more dermatologists in this country is an important manpower development objective. It is our aim to provide an integrated training and credentialling programme through close collaboration between the Ministry of Health, the Universities and the Malaysian Dermatological Society, to provide for a projected increase of at least 10 dermatologists per year. In this respect we will require inputs and cooperation of all our local dermatologists both in public and private sectors and close partnership with international faculties. I am encouraged and happy to know of the setting up of the Masters in Dermatology Post Graduate Course here, which is expected to begin soon, through the collaboration mentioned.

6. Over the next few years, the other major development that our dermatologists and those in the Asean countries will have to face is the effects of globalisation in the professional services. The push for a seamless and borderless world would mean that all professionals will have to be ready to work not only with their local counterparts but also with those from other nations. To do so they would have to be in touch with the latest state-of-the-art developments in their field of interest. They should be ready to form smart partnerships locally and internationally with the aim of exchanging information and knowledge in the interest of their patients. Dermatologists like all other doctors in Malaysia must organise themselves to provide for efficient and affordable patient care services in order that they can continue to provide the services expected of a caring profession.

7. We will also see the introduction of new technology in the diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases in Malaysia. The provision of new technology will mean that cost of medical care will inevitably increase. To be meaningful, this increase must always be translated into better and more efficient patient-care in the

environment of total health management, with emphasis on the prevention of diseases and the promotion of a healthy life-style. As doctors practising in a new economic climate you must be ready to face the pressures that will be exerted to effect some degree of cost- containment. However it is my view that cost- containment should never be allowed to compromise the high quality of patient care that our health and medical system is currently providing to our Malaysian patients.

8. We will also see the increasingly important role of IT in the practice of medicine over the next decade.

Dermatologists and all doctors alike must take the challenge posed by development of IT with the zest and spirit required of true professionals. It shall be within our life-time to see the introduction of tele- dermatology, tele-dermatohistopathology and other similar services in Malaysia. Indeed dermatology is fortunate to be one of the medical disciplines which can be readily developed in the field of tele-medicine. The clinical signs of skin diseases seen on a patient in any remote corner of the world can easily be recorded and transmitted to specialised centres for diagnosis and management. I hope that our dermatologists will take the initiative in this area of medicine.

9. We will be seeing an increase in the use of the electronic media including the internet and teleconferencing to access the large number of doctors especially those serving in the rural areas and in the remote hospitals. This is an important dimension in doctor-doctor and doctor-patient communication in the years to come. An off-shoot of this technology is the provision of distant-learning programmes, continuing medical education (CME) and continuing professional development (CPD) in the field of medicine. In future, with this technology, conferences like the 14th RCD, will be accessible real-time via the electronic media to doctors in remote areas of Malaysia without them having to be physically present.

10. To the practising doctor the ultimate challenge is that posed by the skin disease itself. Many of the skin diseases are labeled as "incurable". To the sufferers of these diseases, this very fact itself contributes to the worsening of their symptoms. Many of them do become desperate and fall prey to the many charlatans and unscrupulous healers who take full advantage of their predicament often prescribing treatment that are not only costly and ineffective but sometimes even dangerous. As professionals, dermatologists must remain alert and must not hesitate to regularly advise the public of the dangers of unproven and unscientific claims. Dermatologists themselves must adhere to proven evidence-based-medicine in the management of their patients. In this respect, I must congratulate the Persatuan Dermatologi Malaysia who have over the past years formulated and produced Consensus Statements and Guidelines in the management of skin diseases like psoriasis, acne and eczema.

11. I have also noticed that there is a significant emphasis on the problem of ageing in this Conference. I am delighted that the organising committee have seen it fit to organise focus sessions, a symposium and a debate on whether we should age gracefully. Indeed, ever since the time of Cleopatra, mankind have been looking for that "eternal fountain of youth". I do hope dermatologists will find it in this Fourteenth Regional Conference in Malaysia.

12. Finally, I must congratulate the organising committee and the Persatuan Dermatologi Malaysia for their efforts in putting together what must be one of the most extensive dermatology events in Asia for the year 2000. I also note that they have organised a culturally rewarding social programme that will make your stay in Malaysia not only scientifically interesting but also socially enriching. I wish you all successful deliberations, while taking the opportunity to make new friends and renew old friendships.

13. Dengan ini saya dengan sukacitanya merasmikan Persidangan Dermatologi Serantau Asia-Australasia ke-14.