

Healthcare in Brunei Darussalam: The Renal Service (Part I)



The dialysis unit team and the first patient to undergo haemodialysis. Dato Sherlock Chin and Dato Peter Hart on the far right of the picture.
Picture source: Dato Peter Hart.

Chronic kidney disease or chronic kidney injury as it is known today was uncommon in the past. The most common form of kidney injury was acute and this was frequently due to prerenal causes, such as diarrhoeal illness leading to dehydration and acute kidney injury. With improvement in the standard of living, better healthcare provision and access, more patients with chronic kidney injury were being seen. These patients require treatment in the form of renal replacement therapy or face imminent death. The government of Brunei made the decision to establish a formal renal in 1967 with the aim of providing regular haemodialysis to patients who required this life saving treatment. Prior to this, the few patients who required renal replacement therapy were treated with peritoneal dialysis.

The healthcare pioneers involved with the establishment of the renal unit were Dato Peter Hart (*BIMJ* 2011; 7 (4):191) and Dato Sherlock Chin. Dato Chin was still training in the United Kingdom when the decision to establish the unit was made, and he was instructed to learn about renal replacement therapy and running a dialysis unit at the Foresterhill Hospital in Aberdeen. When Dato re-

turned, his mentor Dato Hart had left for London to receive his training in renal medicine at the Royal Free Hospital, London. The first patient selected to undergo dialysis was also sent to the United Kingdom to undergo training. After several months of preparation, the service officially started on the 18th September 1968. Due to the limited time for training, the nursing staff and the two doctors involved had to learn by experience.

The unit was located in one of the ward, occupying a room that measured 14 by 16 feet. This was a temporary arrangement before the planned expansion of the Brunei General Hospital (*BIMJ* 2012; 8 (5) 229 to 2013; 9 (2) 79). Two Dylade model B proportioning dialysis machines with heat sterilisation and Kiil dialysers were made available. The machines, accessories and the dialysate were all sourced from the United Kingdom. In times of emergency, the dialysate was manufactured from dry crystals in the hospital pharmacy.

The experience of setting up the dialysis unit and the first five patients was reported in the British Medical Journal in 1971.