



PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN
THE PATH I CHOSE

SYED ALWI ALHABSHEE



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Published in Malaysia by

UNIMAS Publisher,
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,
94300 Kota Samarahan,
Sarawak, Malaysia.

Printed in Malaysia by

Lot 2050, Jalan Swasta
Pending Industrial Estate
93450 Kuching, Sarawak,
Malaysia

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Syed Alwi Syed Abdul Rahman AlHabshee, 1963-

Primary Care Physician : The Path I Chose / Syed Alwi Syed Abdul Rahman AlHabshee.

ISBN 978-967-2298-54-0

1. Primary care (Medicine).
2. Chronic diseases.
3. Health services administration.
4. Government publications --Malaysia.

I. Title.

616

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Preface

The main purpose of this book is to introduce Primary Care and Primary Care Physicians to the general public; the historical background of this specialty, the different roles and functions of primary care physicians and public health specialists in the Malaysia healthcare delivery system. This book briefly touches on the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), the health and economic impact of these chronic diseases in the heavily subsidized health sector such in Malaysia. And the new national strategy played by the Primary Care Physicians as the frontline in battling NCDs in the communities, families, and individuals.

Acknowledgement

I wish to express my appreciation to Universiti Malaysia Sarawak for giving me the opportunity and continued support for my career in a field that I love. My appreciation also goes to the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UNIMAS for all the support they have given me.

My heartfelt thanks go to my colleagues from the Department of Family Medicine, UNIMAS, especially for a great team work that all have shown.

Special thanks to Professor Dr. Syed Hassan bin Syed Ahmad AlMashoor for my official debut in the academic life and for all the continuous support throughout my career in the faculty.

To my wife Dr Siti Rubiah binti Zainudin and my children Syed Hafiz, Sharifah Nafisa and Sharifah Sakinah, my deepest gratitude for all the encouragement, support and patience you have shown throughout my career.

Chapter 1

How I Became a Primary Care Physician: From House Officer to Family Medicine Specialist

Introduction

My career as a medical doctor began 30 years ago as a House Officer at Seremban General Hospital. A few years later, after upgrading and rebranding, it was later changed to Seremban Hospital by the Ministry of Health.

I did not know how I ended up being a medical doctor. If I had a choice, I would have chosen another career, perhaps engineering or something more technical. The journey began with my good examination performance in my 1st and 2nd semester during my *Asasi Sains*. Hence, I was streamed into Biological Science instead of Physical Science. My late mother was overwhelmed with the news as she had always wanted me to be a doctor. As the youngest member in the family, she managed to talk me into accepting it. (Figure 1.1)

Housemanship was only for a year in those days. The attachment usually lasted around three to four months on a few major clinical disciplines or specialties such as Internal Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynaecology

at Seremban Hospital. I became familiarised and started to understand the health care delivery system in Malaysia during my housemanship days.

As a tertiary care or referral centre, Seremban Hospital was very busy. Most of the patients admitted were in acute or critical stages, hence given curative care. After stabilisation, they would be discharged. The patients would usually have a few follow-up sessions with the specialists or medical officers before they were discharged from departmental care. There were no long-term or continuity of care at the hospital level except for certain cases. The health services given at the tertiary hospitals were very fragmented where patients were not treated as a whole individual but rather as a disease or condition. The doctor-patient communication was very poor. Most of the time the family members were left in the dark and not knowing what happened to their loved ones. Then, I realised that hospital-based was not how I wanted to spend my medical career.

Upon completion of my housemanship, I was posted to Kajang Hospital, a Secondary Care Facility. I was with Kajang Hospital for 2-3 years before transferred to Pusat Kesihatan Besar Seri Kembangan, a primary care centre as a Health and Medical Officer. As a Health and Medical Office who was in charge of the centre it became clearer to me that MOH has an established and good health care delivery system. The primary care delivery system was well coordinated, easily accessible, integrated, and gave continuity of health care for individuals, families, and the community level.

Seri Kembangan is a township, and the primary care centre was very busy with 400-500 patient visits per day, I enjoyed working at the centre. Throughout the years at the centre, I had made up my mind that if I was ever going to do my postgraduate study, I would be going to do Primary Care or Family Medicine as my specialty.

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PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN **THE PATH I CHOSE**

Primary Care and Family Medicine specialty is a relatively new specialty in medicine; hence it is least understood and sometimes ignored. The main purpose of this book is to introduce Primary Care and Primary Care Physicians to the general public; the historical background of this specialty, the different roles and functions of primary care physicians and public health specialists in the Malaysia healthcare delivery system. This book briefly touches on the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), the health and economic impact of these chronic diseases in the heavily subsidized health sector such in Malaysia. And the new national strategy played by the Primary Care Physicians as the frontline in battling NCDs in the communities, families, and individuals.

The Author



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ISBN 978-967-2298-54-0



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