

NO PAIN, NO GAIN PLEASURE THROUGH HARDSHIP

(Experience of co-organizing a post conference seminar)

This is my experience after co-organizing a post conference seminar in October last year as a secretary. I am a lecturer in Community Medicine in School of Medicine since February 2008 and this seminar is my first experience in co-organizing a seminar for 2008.

First, let me start with explaining my working environment and job nature. Being as a lecturer in Community Medicine, I was posted to a rural area, Kudat which is about 200 km from Kota Kinabalu. I was posted there to guide year 4 students for their 7 weeks of Community Medicine Posting and one group comprises of 12 students. I have to give them lectures in UMS during the 1st week before they depart from KK. As a module coordinator of CMP for 4th year and MM2012 for year 2 students, I arrange for lectures, health promotion projects, question vetting, conducting exams, correction of answer scripts and sitting for exam board meeting etc.

The proposed seminar was a post conference seminar which was planned for 2 days with a trip to RMEC (Rural Medicine Education Center) at Sikuati, Kudat, the area that I was posted. It was in November 11 -12, 2008 after APACPH conference which was held in Kuala Lumpur for 3 days (8th to 10th Nov). APACPH is an international non-profit organization registered in Australia, comprising many of the largest and most influential schools of Public Health in the Asia-Pacific region and dedicated to improving professional education for public health. Launched in 1984 with just five members, APACPH now has over 55 members throughout the Asia-Pacific region with Regional Offices in Bangkok, Beijing, Brisbane, Hawaii and Tokyo. Through its activities, the members aim to tackle the unique public health challenges of the Asia-Pacific region, for example specific health issues of workers within the growing economies of the region. We aimed this seminar allows continuity for sharing knowledge and experiences on public health issues as well as creates opportunities for collaboration amongst international and national experts to discuss current public health challenges and mechanisms of health care delivery in the rural community; to enable the rural community to be responsible for their own health through continuing smart partnership with healthcare providers and to foster collaboration in conducting educational and research activities amongst international and national public health experts.

We started to organize in 2nd week of October while I was busy with 2nd year question vetting and at the same time conducting year 4 end module exams. Coincidentally, I was involved with the school visit trip to Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, UNIMAS and it took 7 days. I needed to finish exam marking and correspond with international speakers to our seminar in Sabah within 3 weeks time. During the trip, our Dean Prof Osman Ali assigned me and Dr. Khin Maung Ohn@Arif to attend the APACPH conference in KL with poster presenter. The thrill about it was that the abstract closing date was next day. We did manage to send 2 abstracts for 2 health promotion programmes which were done by year 1 students in Banggi Island, near Kudat.

After return from the trip, I prepared 7 posters for our seminar including 2 posters that we had to present in conference. After finishing my posters, it was the day to go for the APACPH conference. In those days, I had 3 hours sleeping time for preparing posters, travelling from KK to Kudat 4 times in a week for preparing 1st day and 2nd day trip to RMEC. In addition, I had to correspond with international speakers from APACPH as well as from MOH to confirm their topics, flights and accommodation within one week time. I was so satisfied to attend the APACPH conference but after reaching in KL I was quite exhausted and got sick.