PUPUK: a community engaged medical curriculum by the School of Medicine, Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Abstract

Background: The medical school of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) aspires to excel in teaching-learning and research activity in the field of medicine locally and regionally. The philosophy behind this is socially driven evidence based medicine. In order to achieve the above, a unique program called PuPUK was designed. This is an acronym for "Program Perkongsian Universiti Keluarga dalam Kesejahteraan Komuniti"or University-Family Partnership in Community Wellness Program. In this program, students will have a family based medicosocial learning experience. Each student is engaged, throughout the 5 years medical course with a foster family from the rural area of Kudat. Thus students are provided with an opportunity to learn medicine in local socio-cultural context hosted by their foster families of Sabah, Malaysia.

Aim & Objectives:

• To appreciate the structure and functions of a family as an important unit in determining and influencing wellness and illness

• To appreciate the family dynamics in facing life events related to medicine

Methods: Students were exposed to a wide range of problems, unmet needs within a family and services available in the community. They were also familiarized with the activities of local leaders, local authorities, government agencies and even non-governmental organizations.

Results & Findings: The program had been running smoothly for the past 8 years. Overall, this community engagement program is well accepted by the selected rural communities of Sabah in Northern Borneo. It also serves as a social training component for medical students as they have to take the role of university ambassadors to the local communities. Some of the rationale, processes, and benefits are discussed in this paper.

Conclusion: To achieve the objectives of this programme named PuPUK, tripartite commitment of all parties concerned - students, university and the community – is essential.