

Khidmat Diutamakan

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ABSTRACT

The Royal Medical and Dental Corps (RMDC) celebrates its Golden Jubilee this year. Over the decades, the RMDC has grown from a medical support to a military unit to an organization with various medical capabilities; and more importantly, with a competent human capital of 600 officers and 3,900 men. The RMDC provides Health Service Support (HSS) to the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) namely for primary care, hospital care and rehabilitative care. In addition, RMDC provides care from the simple cough and cold clinic in the bases to the peace stabilization and disaster relief mission in war torn Afghanistan. Readiness is critical in determining the success of these missions. The strategic approach of the Health Services and RMDC in meeting these demands is to be mission capable at all times, using the time-tested formula of preparation of men, machine and methodology.

Keywords: The Royal Medical and Dental Corp, Health Service Support, Readiness, Mission Capable, Malaysian Armed Forces

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Medical and Dental Corps (RMDC) was established under the Act of Parliament on 11 May 1967. Initially, it started as an organic unit to Malaysian Army and now has evolved to the present RMDC with its capabilities it possess today. Over the five decades, it has evolved as a Military Health Service with the capability of five hospitals, four mobile army medical units; three health institutes; 83 sick quarters and 54 dental clinics. The British handed over the Kinrara Hospital in 1968, the Terendak Hospital in 1978. The 96 HAT Lumut was officiated in 1998, Mizan replaced Kinrara in 2008 and Sipangar and Gemas in 2010 and 2011 respectively. The medical battalions were re-aligned to one battalion in East Malaysia and the other in West Malaysia. Two other mobile medical units were formed in support of the Army Special Forces and Parachute Brigade. The Institut Latihan Kesihatan Angkatan Tentera (INSAN AT) has been the backbone of RMDC officer and paramedic training. The Institute of Aviation Medicine was formed in 1976 and its counterpart, the Institute of Underwater and Hyperbaric Medicine in 1998. The various Services are supported by the Armed Forces Sick Quarters and Dental Clinics. There are 600 officers and 3900 men in the RMDC who are the backbone of the MAFHS.

MISSION

The Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) as a conventional force, safeguards the sovereignty and interest of the nation. At the same time, it is involved in global and regional non-traditional security missions. The MAF is also a key player in the nation building as spelled out in the National Defence philosophy. The MAF Health Services (MAFHS) which is predominantly staffed by the RMDC personnel, is responsible for providing HSS to the multi-dimensional missions tasked to the MAF. At the same time, MAFHS also provides health services to the dependants, veterans as well as the general public in times of need. The RMDC has been involved in many other missions namely Peace Support Operations in Congo in 1960; Somalia in 1992; Bosnia in 1994; Pakistan in 2002; Timor Leste in 2006; Western Sahara in 2007, Lebanon in 2008 and Afghanistan in 2010. In the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) International Missions, the RMDC has deployed to Flores in 1992; Aceh in 2004; Battagram in 2005; Yogyakarta in 2006; Yangon in 2008; Padang in 2009; Tacloban in 2013 and Nepal in 2015 at various levels of medical capabilities, treating thousands of patients. At the local level, the RMDC have been involved in various HADR mission such as OP MURNI (flood relief) in 2007, 2013 and the major east coast floods of 2014-2015.

The RMDC Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) team was involved in identifying the MH17 and the AirAsia crash victims in 2014. In 1999, the RMDC personnel were heavily involved in the control of Nipah virus outbreak. Similarly, in 2004, 2009 and 2014, RMDC personnel were involved in assisting the Ministry of Health in the control measures of SARS, H1N1 and Ebola pandemics in Malaysia. The 2013 OP DAULAT and the medical response required by the Forward Surgical as well as the Mental Health Teams in the rescue of MV Orkim Harmony in June 2015 served as a reminder of medical readiness at all times. Apart from Heart and Minds Operations, other Nation Building projects that the RMDC have been involved include medical support in motorsports events such as F1 and MotoGP, cycling races Le Tour de Langkawi and Jelajah Malaysia; the Commonwealth and Sea Games; and the Malaysian Angkasawan Programme.

Man

In meeting these demands, the RMDC personnel have to be competent and ready at all times. Various measures have been taken to ensure the personnel are developed individually and collectively. At the very basic level, the officers are inducted for six weeks at the Medical Officer Dental Officer (MODO) course in INSAN AT.

They are trained in both Regimental as well as the Military Medicine topics. They then progress to a career out in the units, field, UN Missions before being absorbed back into the AFH. Throughout their career, they are provided training in field medicine, combat casualty care, ACLS, MTLs, CBRN, HADR, diving medicine, aviation medicine and Law of Armed Conflict. Officers are given the opportunity to progress in post-graduate studies in Clinical, Public Health or Command Courses. Sub-specialty training is also provided in niche areas.

The current paramedic of RMDC enter the MAF on two entry programmes which are the Diploma Pathway and SPM Pathway. The Diploma graduates progress through an accelerated program to achieve full military medicine and hospital practice competency. The SPM graduates are introduced basic paramedic courses before being given the opportunity to progress with MQA accredited Allied Health Diplomas offered in INSAN. They are also subjected to military regimental and leadership training as well as specialist courses such as diving medicine, aviation medicine and combat casualty course to hone their skills. The personnel are also exposed to seminars and courses conducted by external agencies to keep them abreast with latest medical practice and technology.

Machine

To ensure the RMDC personnel are able to function clinically, every effort is made to provide the necessary infra-structure and tools of the trade for them. The RMAF procured a human centrifuge for aviation medicine which was used as part of the Angkasawan Selection Programme in 2005. During the 9th Malaysian Plan, MAF HQ completed the development of the 282 bed AFH Tuanku Mizan. Apart from the state of the art medical equipment, the AFH TM was also equipped with a ten-man hyperbaric chamber for the practice of diving medicine and hyperbaric therapy. The 93 Military Health Depot applies the 5S and Bistari Store concept and has won a few awards. It also has ready health support packages for HADR Deployment. The Malaysian Army has also built a 20-bed hospital to cater for the needs of the Gemas Garrison. The Sipanggar Submarine base has a 40-bed hospital to cater the needs of the Submarine Force Headquarters.

Under the 10th Malaysia plan the AFH Tuanku Mizan was equipped with the latest ophthalmology SMILE and LASIK surgical apparatus and a cardiac catheterization lab was installed in 2015. The latest tool to aid military healthcare practitioners in the field of Military Health Informatics is the Military Lifetime Health Record (MLHR) system launched in 2013 and fully implemented in April 2017. This system allows for electronic medical record keeping, data analysis as well as future planning of health resources. In 2017 also sees the re-consolidation of the medical laboratory services, with the provision of service is standardized throughout the country for health screening investigations and regional centres for point of care laboratory services.

In the 11th Malaysian Plan, Ministry of Defence has allocated 25 million ringgit for the upgrading of INSAN AT teaching facilities and another 33 million for the re-building the polyclinic in Kuching. Not all assets are newly procured. The Field Hospital Prime Mover Container System brought into service during the Bosnian mission is maintained periodically and is still road-worthy. It has seen numerous deployments such as Aceh in 2004, Pekan in 2007 and Manek Urai in 2014. Another two mobile assets worth mentioning are the Dental Bus Canine and the Dental Module Bicuspid which are used for rural out-reach programmes. Other aspects of field support is the innovation projects of Bio-sand filter JERNIH and mobile dental chair CAT which won numerous awards.

Methodology

The MAFHS and RMDC are bounded by the Armed Forces Act 1972, the Armed Forces Council Instructions (AFCI), Directives and Doctrines. To further ensure the delivery of military health-care is executed in a safe, efficient and cost-effective manner, numerous health policies, practices and guidelines are developed. The Armed Forces Medical Administration and Technical Instructions (AFMATI) and the Armed Forces Medical Classification System (AFMeCS) are the two main references document that covers these aspects. From the clinical perspective, the MAFHS and RMDC personnel are also bounded by the Medical Act 1971 and the corresponding Acts for other practitioners. Standardized Hospital Policies have been introduced incorporating Medical and Dental Advisory Committee who play a major role in Clinical Governance. The MDAC is assisted by numerous sub-committees such as the Infectious Control sub-committee; Patient Safety sub-committee; Mortality and Morbidity sub-committee and many others.

To improve on work processes, all AFH and Institutes have adopted the MS ISO 9001:2000/2008 Quality Management System and are planning to embark on the MSQH accreditation programme. The Health Inspectorate post was created in 2010 to ensure all aspects of Health Administration, Clinical Governance and Oversight are adhered to. The Joint HSS Doctrine and numerous Army Medical Doctrines provide guidance to the Medical Field Commanders in aspects of Hygiene, First Aid, Tactical Casualty Care, Combat Stress Reaction, Evacuation and Medical Battalion Formation. Newer health doctrines on HADR and CBRN Health Support Operations and Syariah compliant pharmaceutical service have been incorporated.

CONCLUSION

The RMDC provides men and women for the MAFHS which in turn provides HSS to the MAF in many types of operations. One key area of mission accomplishment is medical readiness and this can be achieved through preparation of man, machine and methodology.

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