

## LETTER TO EDITOR

### SCHOOL OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA – THE FIRST 25 YEARS IN POETRY

Professor Dr Nor Hayati Othman  
School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Health Campus  
16150 Kubang Kerian, Kelantan, Malaysia

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> medical school it was destined to be  
Located in faraway land, far from a big city  
While the 2 senior schools are in the zone of neon lights  
This particular one is in the state of 'wau-bule' kite*

*The name of the place is Kubang Kerian  
Unheard of by most till this School came around  
At the beginning it faced many obstacles  
The Penang buildings not ready nor KK land available*

*The early years began in the campus at Minden  
Where Minah Curry House was our favourite joint  
Nasi kandar, mee mamak, we have left them behind  
We go back to Minden every now and then*

*The pioneers were people with good foresight  
Their ideas and visions charted this School right  
The curriculum used was 'too advanced' at that stage  
They went on with the job like people crazed*

*The first students were eager and enrolled as planned  
They were placed in small rooms that fit like thin cans  
The building was nothing but a shack of wooden hut  
In that building the pioneers worked themselves very hard*

*The students came with high aspirations  
They were blessed and honoured by the whole nation  
They did not mind the shabby condition  
As long as their teachers taught them Medicine*

*The early teachers were not that many  
Syed Mohsein, Ong Kok Hai, Rahman Isa and Saidi  
Jayakumar, Thevarasah, Yunus and Maheswaran  
Tawda Win, Ting Aw, Elango, and Prathap Chand*

*Rogayah, George Ling, Hamiadji and George Chaco  
Shanta, Rattan, Zulkifli and Koenjoro  
Ong Lean Swee, Toh Hock Tye, Chowdri and Gheeta  
Asma, Rabindar, Khairul Anwar and Mandira*

*These names are not in any order  
And there are many more I cannot remember  
Richard Lobo, Sabariah, Peter Simmons and Kamaruzzaman  
These are few more that came to my mind.*

*PK Das, Fernando, Jamal and Musalmah  
Khin U May, Darah, Nurul Azman and Normah  
Ismail, Wan Arifin, Zainol and Nazim Salleh  
Many of these have left this place*

*If I have left out names, please forgive me  
They were so long ago, no records to see  
To those who have left us, we say 'thank you'  
To the few that remains, we say 'cheers to you'.*

*There is this man, the father of us all,  
He was fortunate to receive the Call  
When he started the School from scratch  
No one believed what he could achieve*

*He moved bricks, he surveyed the land  
Picked one place and started the plan  
He worked fast and gathered more staff  
Every one worked but people weren't enough*

*He ruled the School in the manner he thought best  
Despite getting some other requests;  
His strategy worked and the blocks were completed  
Within the time frame that was required.*

*To Roslani Sir, the poem is for you  
We are grateful for the things you do  
We may disagree on a few matters  
The bottom line is, PPSP is the focus.*

*There are people in the know, there are people that are prized  
These are the people whom, we want to tap what they profess;  
Their wisdom is sought, their ideas are cherished  
To the think-tankers of the School, you have always given your best.*

*They were Roslani, Mustafa, Mafauzy and Zabidi  
These 4 deans held the helm for a quarter of century  
They charted and they planned and they reviewed the curriculum  
For every one of them the School's milestones get affirmed*

*They were not alone to chart the growth  
The deputies were there in every move  
Saidi, Kamaruzzaman, Rahman, Wahab and Asma  
Mazidah, Wan Mohammad, Rashid, and Zalina.*

*Aziz, Rusli and Nor Hayati Othman  
Are the deputies who are currently at helm  
With phase coordinators and various chairmen  
They ensure programs are smoothly run*

*Kamarazuman and Ramli are the hospital directors  
They run the hospital for the last 20 years  
Ghani, Hashim, Wan Nik and later Ruslan  
Mohd Rahman, Zaidun assist the hospital administration*

*Other lecturers are the think – tankers too  
For without them, there is no one to turn to  
Some of them old, some of them new  
Giving out their best like everyone else too.*

*We value the words expressed by all  
Regardless of when and who gives the call  
Every comment is taken, every complaint is acted upon  
That is how the wisdom is shown*

*Brick by brick; Block by block  
Many came and many click  
To Kubang Kerian people flock.*

*HUSM was once the tallest building in KB  
Next to it is are blocks of PPSP  
It is not complete without the medical library  
And later enhanced by the school of dentistry*

*Keep walking and you will see more  
Like PPSK, INFORMM and Dewan Utama  
There is a golf course and many sports fields  
Where staff and students sweat out or do drills.*

*The Health Campus is not what it used to be  
There are now many more cars and much more busy  
If you are not lucky, you get caught in traffic jam  
Within the campus itself, as if there is a passing tram!*

*With many facts and theories we are faced  
The best kind of learning is problem-based  
It may be 'confusing' to most at first  
The advantages exceed the headaches & 'curse'.*

*This approach is easier and much more real  
Each discipline being like the spokes of the wheel  
Working outwards we learn all the necessary skills  
Like anatomy, pharmacology and giving out pills.*

*This teaching method should always get the vote  
Over learning exhaustive details by rote  
For beyond the memorizing of so many a fact  
The useful person is one who can act.*

*We have been doing PBL for years  
And happy about it and so are the others  
Many come over to learn our trait  
We gladly show them how we do it.*

*Standing tall in gleaming white coats  
Holding flasks, pipettes or stethoscopes  
Mixing blood, serum or just body secretions  
Scientists discover and uncover inventions.*

*Staying-up late to see experimental curves  
On herbal, cancer and cardiovascular research  
Telehealth, reconstructive and sciences on nerves  
Not forgetting genomic, sports and health policies research.*

*We conduct many clinical trials  
Together with colleagues from all over the world  
On diabetes, psychosis, high BP and pressure sores  
MAKNA and, MOSTI are some of the sponsors*

*We house many awards recipients  
I-TEX, MOSTI and Toray Foundation  
Geneva, Nuremburg are venues of competition  
Medals and trophies bring cheers to some*

*Gather lots of people in one hall  
Then call a VIP or royalty to officiate the call  
He cuts ribbons, he grazes the wall  
Amidst the cheers he stands tall.*

*We do a lot of these in PPSP  
We sign MOUs and we sign treaties  
Linkages are established with other universities  
Students and staff benefit from these.*

*University of Kobe and University of Ghent  
Are some of the many universities that we have signed  
Be they in Cuba, in Canada or in Japan  
We link with them for all kinds of collaboration.*

*USMUS, JICA, JCMT and JSPS  
WHO, UNESCO, ECFMG and Commonwealth  
These are some of the sponsors of the linkages  
We are thankful to them for their selflessness*

*We put on our socks and we go out to play  
With friends and foes we sweat and sway  
We scream, we yell and we hop around  
We worry less 'bout people around*

*That is not a lot that is not enough  
At night we sing at parties and such  
Then we take the stage we express our voice  
We definitely lack talents but no one cares!*

*We are passionate in things we do  
We are serious people and yet fun too  
We parade and we march for all to see  
Like those men in Malaysian army*

*Recreation is a form of treatment  
To the aching bodies and unresting mind  
It is good for body and is great for soul  
Come and join us lets rock and roll!*

*Professors, APs and lecturers  
Are the thinkers and the pillars  
They have responsibility on their shoulders  
To run workshops and conduct seminars*

*Support staff provides all the arrangement  
They carry the jobs, without much complaint  
Weeks in weeks out, workshops are run  
Students and staff, they all have fun*

*We once used overhead projectors  
Using transparencies and colourful markers  
Then we were taught to use the computers  
Since that day, we improved our lectures*

*Everything now is in digital forms  
If you are not in it you do not conform  
Students are taught the creative way  
That's the way forward till the end of day*

*When you are 25 years old  
You have achieved so many goals  
You are a pioneer of this and a pioneer of that  
However, we say them softly, we do not want to brag*

*We do not stop here, there is more we need to do  
Give us time we will prove it to you  
PPSP is a force, it's to be reckon with  
The other medical schools, they're green with envieth.*

*We face challenges, and we face them squarely  
At times these challenges bring disharmony  
For 25 years now, we continue to stand  
Challenges, disharmony are part of the game.*

*For those in USM and those outside  
Let us tell you what is on our side  
This School will grow and grow forever  
To be the top medical school all over.*

*Finally, this is my last poem  
I have penned these in one good moment  
I hope you enjoy them as much as I do  
I have no proper training, these are impromptu*

## LETTER TO EDITOR

### POOR PERCEPTION OF SUBJECTIVE CHANGE IN BREATHLESSNESS- A RANDOMIZED, CROSSOVER, PLACEBO- CONTROLLED STUDY OF ASTHMATIC SUBJECTS

Li-Cher Loh, Jacynta Jayaram, Clarence Kavetha, Sue Jiun Wong

Department of Medicine  
International Medical University, Clinical School, Seremban

Dear Editor,

As part of a study to validate a new assessment tool (three-minute respiratory exercise test, 3MRET)<sup>1</sup>, 14 asthmatic subjects [mean (95%): age, 39 (27-50) yrs, FEV<sub>1</sub>, 63 (57- 68)% predicted normal; male, 42%] were randomized to receiving either nebulised 10mg bricanyl (active) or normal saline (placebo), in a crossover, double-blind study. The mean percentage (95% CI) FEV<sub>1</sub> change after nebulised active and placebo agents were +23 (+8 to +38) and 0 (-6 to +5) respectively.

Subjects were asked as to whether they were less breathless (score=1), more breathless (score=2) or did not sense any change or were not sure (score=3) after each nebulisation. All 14 subjects reported a score of 1 when administered active agent. Only 2 subjects correctly scored 3 when administered placebo while the rest reported a score of 1. None of the subjects reported a score of 2.

When Perception of Dyspnoea (POD) index based on 3MRET<sup>1</sup> was used, 9 subjects correctly recorded a reduction of POD when administered active agent and 10 subjects correctly recorded an equivocal POD index (taken arbitrarily as change of <13, a figure taken from the lower bound of 95% confidence level of the mean increase). Based on these figures, the subjective sense of change in breathlessness has a sensitivity of 100% and a specificity of only 16%, while POD index has a sensitivity of 60% and a specificity of 77%.

Taken together, the findings highlighted the unreliability of subjective perception in changes of breathlessness among asthmatic subjects<sup>2,3</sup>. Symptoms limiting exercise test like 3MRET that is based on maximal repetitive inspiratory efforts capable of an individual within 3 minutes<sup>1</sup> may have a role in improving the detection of changes in POD. The implication on POD is huge since asthma

management is primarily symptom-directed. The ability to improve the awareness of breathlessness or changes in breathlessness, by patients and clinicians will represent an important milestone in the management of asthma.

#### References

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2. Teeter JG, Bleecker ER. Relationship between airway obstruction and respiratory symptoms in adult asthmatics. Chest 1998; **113**(2): 272-7
3. Manning HL, Schwartzstein RM. Respiratory sensations in asthma: physiological and implications. J Asthma 2001; **38**(6): 447-60.

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Length/volume	meter cubic meter milliliter	m m <sup>3</sup> ml	Time	hour minute second	h min s
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