

Promoting national and international collaborations at the Institute of Medicine, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

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1. Landmarks in international scientific collaborations

Notable recent international collaborative research projects that have had a major impact on science include the Word Climate Research Programme (WCRP). The results from the WCRP led to the recommendations of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that in turn led to international agreements on limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Their significance was recognised by the IPCC being jointly awarded the Nobel prize for peace in 2007 [1].

More directly concerning human health, the human genome project (HGP) was a large international, laboratory-based, collaborative effort [2]. Commencing in October 1990, the international DNA sequencing consortium was made up of laboratories in the following countries: China, France, Germany, Japan, the UK and the USA. The HGP was completed in April 2003. The HGP has helped characterize genes associated with many human diseases and led to the invention of the high-end tools including computers and sophisticated techniques. A large number of scientists and technicians enhanced their skills in advanced DNA techniques as a result of the HGP. New issues concerning ethics, law and society pertaining to the information obtained from the sequencing the human genome have led to the universal adoption of new codes in bioethics. An important message from programs such as the HGP and WCRP is that collaborative efforts benefit not just one individual, organization or country, but have multiple benefits for many organizations, societies and countries.

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2. Research in health care

Health care can be seen as becoming more complex as different health professionals are involved in the diagnosis, treatment and overall care of a patient. Recently there has been a move to include more inter-professional learning in medical curriculum across the globe [3]. Consequently some aspects of medical and health care research also requires that interdisciplinary teams work together in the planning of the research work. This process helps to develop links between health professionals. It has been reported that success and continuity of collaboration depends on social features of the relationship and not just the cognitive products, sufficient meetings or equal status [4].

3. Collaborations in teaching and learning at the Institute of Medicine

Medical and health care education in Brunei Darussalam started with the establishment of the Institute of Medicine in 2000. IM has a mission to support the vision of UBD in becoming a world class international University with a distinctive national identity. To perform this mission, and being a young and developing faculty, IM promotes collaborations in the delivery of its teaching, research and professional development. IM collaborates with Ministry of Health, Brunei Darussalam in the delivery of the MSc in Primary Health Care. The undergraduate programme, Bachelor of Health Science/Medicine was developed with a major support from St George's, University of London formerly known as St George's School of Medicine, University of London. A great deal of clinical teachings in this programme is also undertaken by clinicians and general practitioners from the Ministry of Health. The programme is a three-year ordinary degree after which students will transfer to a partner medical school in Australia, Canada or the United Kingdom. The students will graduate with a medical degree from the respective partner school.

The Institute of Medicine has also established collaboration with Faculty of Medicine, Kagawa University, Japan, in the areas of student and staff exchange. The international summer medical school attended each year by eight medical students from Kagawa University has run for two years, and is very popular with the Japanese students. Students from the Institute of Medicine have also visited and undertaken academic activities at the Faculty of Medicine, Kagawa University through an international winter exchange programme. This program is funded by Japanese Student Services Organisation (JSSO) and the Brunei government.

4. Collaborations in research at the Institute of Medicine

Staff from Institute of Medicine, Universiti of Brunei Darussalam and Faculty of Medicine, Kagawa University have exchanged visits, and young Bruneian faculty at IM have explored possible research collaborations, with Faculty of Medicine, Kagawa University. One Bruneian tutor is currently researching for a PhD at the Department of Pharmacology, Kagawa University.

Collaborations to establish research in other areas of health sciences are actively pursued. A memorandum of understanding is being developed with University of Montpellier, France. Specific interests have been expressed in the fields of immunology, Islamic medicine, natural products and oncology.

Research projects are also undertaken collaboratively with clinicians and public health professionals from the Ministry of Health. Some involve student projects with joint supervision coming from faculty at the Institute of Medicine and staff at the Ministry of Health.

At present the Institute of Medicine staff are also engaged in collaborative research projects in biomedical sciences, neuroscience, epidemiology and public health, and medical and health profession education with counterparts in many countries including Bangladesh, Canada, Iran, Japan, France, Germany, Malaysia, Nigeria, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Such collaborations enhance the international profile of the Institute of Medicine and UBD

5. References

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