

Delivering HPB Services in Sabah

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Sabah is the 2nd largest state in Malaysia with land area of 73,000km² and a population of approximately 4 million people. Located at the west coast of Sabah in Kota Kinabalu, Hospital Queen Elizabeth (QE) serves as the regional tertiary care center providing multiple subspecialized treatment including Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary (HPB) Surgery.

Our HPB unit in QE receive referrals from the other major hospitals in Sabah such as Hospital Duchess of Kent Sandakan (Northeast, 350km), Hospital Lahad Datu (East, 410km), Hospital Tawau (Southeast, 450km) & Hospital Keningau (South, 100km). In view of distance and the geographical terrains of Sabah, patient's transfer is difficult especially the transfer of unstable patients to QE, hence, it becomes very important for us to reach out and provide the necessary services to these centres. Here we would like to share one of our experiences in managing a patient in Hospital Lahad Datu.



It was our usual Tuesday morning ERCP list when we received a phone call from Dr. Allaiyna, the sole surgeon serving in Hospital Lahad Datu. She attended to a young patient who sustained an abdominal trauma where a grade 4 pancreatic injury was discovered. Patient was intubated for airway protection and eventually required ventilation with inotropic support. As the patient was not stable to be transported to QE, we decided to take a flight to Lahad Datu.

We brought along some surgical instruments, sutures and a duodenoscope (needed for 2 other patients with cholangitis at our destination) and travelled to Hospital Lahad Datu via MAS Wing flight. The journey was about an hour and the view shifted from a beautiful archipelago of islands to the majestic Mount Kinabalu. It took us barely 5 minutes to disembark, security clearance and out with our luggage.



From top right to left

1. Leaving to Lahad Datu via MAS Wing with 'unusual' hand luggage (duodenoscope)
2. Beautiful island view upon take off from Kota Kinabalu
3. Passing by the magnificent Mount Kinabalu

Bottom

4. Hari with Lahad Datu Airport In the background



At the airport entrance, we were greeted by Dr. Stephy Khoo who was our liaison Medical Officer for HPB patients in Lahad Datu. Hospital Lahad Datu has a capacity of 250 beds and provides specialist medical care to the community. In the operating theatre, the surgical team was ready with the patient being prepared for the surgery. The surgery took us about 4hrs, from exploration, debridement and pancreaticogastrostomy anastomosis. Patient remained stable throughout the surgery, thanks to the excellent anesthesiology team headed by Dr. Ng. The surgery ended around 4pm and after a quick lunch, we proceeded with ERCPs for the two patients with cholangitis. Although it was not the usual procedures performed that day at Hospital Lahad Datu, the anesthesiology, nurses and GIA team surprised us with their preparedness in handling the situation.



*Performing ERCP for cholangitis patient
Operator: Hari
GIA: Me*

*Performing the surgery
(From the left: Hari, Khoo, Allaiyna & Me)*

The next morning, we checked on the patient in ICU and updated the next of kin regarding patient's progress. Prior to leaving the hospital, we had a brief meeting with Dr. Ridwan bin Hashim, Pengarah Hospital Lahad Datu and thanked him for the prompt arrangement of our flight & accommodation. We headed home with great satisfaction. Dr. Allaiyna constantly updated us regarding the progress of the patient. It was a great pleasure for us to know that the patient recovered well and was discharged home to her family about 2 weeks later.



*Right:
Meeting with Pengarah
before leaving (From the
left: Allaiyna, Dr
Ridwan, me & Hari)*

*Left:
Khoo with patient on the
day of discharge*

Providing HPB surgery services in Sabah has its own challenges and merits. Experience gained during subspeciality training and working in Sarawak, which has almost similar geographical terrain as Sabah, have assisted us in adapting and managing patients from hospitals far from Kota Kinabalu. Networking with surgical colleagues and multidisciplinary team discussions is paramount in managing our patients in Sabah.