OPENING ADDRESS

YANG BERHORMAT
PEHIN ORANG KAYA JOHAN PAHLAWAN
DATO SERI SETIA AWANG HAJI ADANAN
BIN BEGAWAN PEHIN SIRAJA KHATIB
DATO SERI SETIA HAJI MD. YUSOF
MINISTER OF HEALTH
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

MAJLIS PERMUZAKARAHAN
MENTERI KESIHATAN DENGAN KONSULTAN
DAN DOKTOR DALAM BIDANG PERUBATAN,
KESIHATAN DAN PERGIGIAN

WEDNESDAY,
28 RABIULAWAL 1435 / 29 JANUARY 2014
7.30 PM

VENUE:
DEWAN AL-‘AFIAH
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
Yang Mulia Datin Paduka Dr Hajah Norlila binti Dato Paduka Haji Abdul Jalil, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health

Yang Mulia Hjh Siti Mariam binti Hj Mohd Jaafar, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Administration and Finance), Ministry of Health

Yang Mulia Dr Hjh Rahmah binti Hj Md Said, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Professional and Technical), Ministry of Health

Director Generals, Directors, Chief Executive Officers, Senior Officers, and all our Consultants, Doctors, Dentists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

and a very good evening

1. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here with you this evening. I am delighted that many Consultants, Doctors from the Medical, Health and Dental Services are able to sacrifice your time to turn up to attend tonight’s function. I also like to take this opportunity to convey my appreciation and thanks for all your hard work, commitment and dedication in carrying out your duties and responsibilities over the year, 2013. I pray may Allah Subhanahu Wata’ala bless all of your endeavours.
2. Alhamdulillah, 2013 was an eventful year for the Ministry of Health in which we have achieved several milestones in the history of healthcare services in our country. In particular, the Renal Services Department for initiating the Renal Transplant Programme in Brunei Darussalam in which the first successful renal transplant operation was performed in our country, the Cardiology Department, for launching the first Renal Denervation Treatment for Hypertension and to the Endocrinology Department, for initiating the insulin infusion pump therapy as an alternative treatment regime for diabetic patients.

3. In addition to that, the Ministry of Health has also successfully completed several infrastructure projects, such as the new additional block to the Department of Scientific Services, Pengiran Anak Puteri Hajah Mutawakillah Hayatul Bolkiah Health Centre, the Health Learning and Development Centre at Suri Seri Begawan Hospital, our new wing to the Ministry of Health’s Building as well as this new beautiful hall in which we are in now, Dewan Al’Afiah, amongst others. With these new facilities, we hope not only to improve the quality and expand the scope of services that we provide to our patients and the community, in terms of their comfort in a more conducive environment, but also we are mindful to the welfare of our staff so as to provide our staff with better working conditions and facilities for training and organising health activities. We are looking forward to the completion of the new
Women & Children Block, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital later this year.

4. The beginning of the year is usually an appropriate time for each and every one here, whether you are the Head of Department, Consultant or Doctor to reflect and take stock of what you have done the previous year as well as to review and assess your own performance, so that you can then plan not only to further improve, develop and grow, but more importantly to be innovative in the new year 2014. The improvement and innovative approach that I am referring to is not just in terms of overall services given to the public and patients in general from the organisational aspect, but also at the level of each individual doctor, meaning the quality and empathy of clinical care given by you personally, especially to each of your patients and the community at large. In this respect we need to assess ourselves to care, treat and manage each of your patients to the best of your ability. And if not, why?

5. Meanwhile, to the Heads of Departments and Heads of Clinical Services, you need to ask yourselves why you have not completed all the projects and programmes which you have planned to implement in 2013 and achieved all the targets that you yourselves have set? And more importantly for those projects and programmes which you were unable to implement, you must identify why this had happened so that in the future,
the same mistakes can be avoided, any gaps can be properly addressed and thus implementation will be a complete success.

6. In this regard, the Heads of Department at the Ministry of Health have already reviewed their performance at the end of November, where each Head of Department had to present their latest budget status as well as share with the rest of the HODs the list of incomplete or outstanding projects for 2013. Then, in January the HODs had to present their plans for 2014. These important sessions have enabled us to discuss projects and programmes in detail to identify why each project and programme was not able to be successfully completed in 2013. And then work together through systematic planning, monitoring and finally follow through its implementation to ensure better outcome this year. This was not to find faults but rather to enable the Ministry to identify the root cause and eventually resolve the outstanding issues together as a team, in a more concerted and effective manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. In the context of today’s health care, every discipline – CONSULTANTS, DOCTORS, NURSES AND OTHER ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS – are equally important because they all form an integral part in patient-centred care and health
management. That is the reason why I strongly urge the importance of a strong multidisciplinary teamwork, mutual understanding and cooperation among all of us, especially you all, I regard as the most important team leaders in the care of the patients. This is our common goal which is particularly true in the current practice of medicine. When we all function as a strong and cohesive team and when everybody plays his or her part, the job itself is easier, simpler, more efficient and effective in producing best clinical results. Moreover, overall the quality of patient care and well-being will benefit the most. I am very sure this is what our patients and the public expect from us.

8. This is also being strongly emphasised by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations which places the crucial values on TEAMWORK. Furthermore, the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations, fully recommends that, “… teamwork is essential for optimizing quality and safety in the care of hospitalized patients.” This is our wish and goal in order to achieve international accreditation.

9. In this regard, teamwork is paramount in the clinical area, the best treatment is often achieved by a multidisciplinary strong team, from various specialties and health professions working together. An excellent example is the Renal Transplant Programme which I
mentioned earlier, whereby success was achieved due to the excellent collaboration and synergy between the Renal Physicians, Renal Transplant Nurses, General Surgeons, Urologist, Vascular Surgeon, Anaesthetist and Critical Care Physician, gelled together and fully supported by the Management team who ensured that all logistics were in place. In the same manner, the same kind of strong teamwork is also crucial for the Ministry of Health to function effectively and efficiently. This strong teamwork should be in place between Departments, Medical, Health and Dental as well as the other Departments in the Ministry, such as Radiology, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Laboratory in order that the services, care and treatment that we provide to our patients, their families and the public in general, is the best and optimised, in terms of quality and effectiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Let me recap from the recent Heads of Department Meeting at the Ministry level, there are clearly several key issues which are very pertinent and fundamentally linked to your roles, functions and performance as Clinicians. I would like to share with you that these are all important factors and aspects which I have frequently mentioned and stressed upon again and again, such as Quality Care, Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures, (SOPs), professional codes of practice and conduct, and good communication which are all essential
and core foundations of the duties and responsibilities of each Consultant, Doctor and Dentist, in order for you to be able to provide optimum care to your patients.

11. Firstly, regarding the need for guidelines and Standard Operational Procedures or SOPs; I have been informed that….. YES…. we do have SOPs, and YES…. we do have guidelines… in fact I was told we have many SOPs and guidelines. But, if that is the case then we should not be receiving any more incidences or complaints related to SOPS. Unfortunately, this is not the case. In reality, the Ministry still receives some complaints from patients and relatives which when we investigated, it was found that the root cause of the problem was that the relevant guideline or SOP was not being followed and adhered to. Therefore, I strongly urge everyone here today, who has the best interest of the patient at heart, to ensure that you should always practise according to the SOP or clinical practice guideline or CPG as well as best clinical practices. If the guideline or SOP is not yet in place then all the doctors in that particular specialty should work together and fully committed to formulate an up-to-date SOP or CPG. Following that, HODs and Head of Clinical Services must then ensure and monitor compliance of their staff to the agreed SOP or CPG, so that when audited you have the evidence to assure that the clinical care that the Ministry of Health is providing is truly of proven quality and accordance with best practices.
12. I hope that in 2014, everyone concerned will all make a fully concerted effort to strengthen the monitoring, implementation and compliance to SOPs and CPGs. At the same time, I wish to stress that the SOPs within similar services and specialties must be standardized in all hospitals and health centres. Only then we can maintain and align quality, efficient and effective care throughout all our healthcare facilities. A robust Clinical Quality Assurance programme will certainly boost patient and public confidence and trust in our health care system.

13. The next key issue I want to raise is the public expectation for all our Health Professionals, especially doctors and dentists to always practice according to a high standard of professionalism and ethics. Because of your specialised knowledge and expertise, doctors and dentists have a responsibility to improve and maintain the health of the patients in your care as well as the public in general. Patients who need our service may be in a vulnerable state of illness. Or, they may come to you to maintain their health. Whatever their reason to consult you, they have entrusted themselves and their fate in your hands. This also applies to those of you who do not deal directly with patients. Therefore, because of such a heavy responsibility, the public and the Ministry do expect their consultants, doctors and dentists to uphold the highest degree of professionalism and discipline at all times.
14. The public also expects our health professionals especially consultants, doctors and dentists to always uphold an image which, to the eyes of the community, reflects a high degree of professionalism. I therefore wish to remind all of you here today, not only as public servants and part of the civil service but more importantly as medical professionals, you should always dress in smart work attire at the same time respecting and mindful of our Bruneian traditions, based on the Malay Islamic Monarchy concept or MIB when you are on duty. This will create a positive professional image and understanding as well as generate more confidence from your patients, their families and societies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. The Ministry of Health expects our doctors and dentists to abide by the Good Medical and Dental Practice. I have often mentioned about the importance of the Good Medical and Dental Practice, which spells out in detail the principles and values on which good medical and dental practice is founded. Thus, once again I would like to remind everyone that this Code of Practice and ethics published by the Brunei Medical Board (BMB) should not just remain kept on the shelf but instead should be followed and practised diligently by every medical and dental practitioner registered with the BMB. I would like to remind everyone here regarding the six basic duties
expected of a doctor or dentist according to The Good Medical and Dental Practice which are:

- Putting patients first and foremost;
- Protecting and promoting health not only of individual patients but also that of the public in general;
- Providing a good standard of practice and care including keeping knowledge and skills up to date, as well as knowing and working within one’s own limit of competence;
- Respecting the patient’s dignity while at the same time treating them with compassion;
- Accepting patients and families as partners; and last but not least;
- The importance of honesty and integrity.

Here is a noble and important excerpt from the Good Medical and Dental Practice, as follows;

“Good Doctors and Dentists.

Patients need good doctors and dentists. Good doctors and dentists make the care of their patients their first concern; they are competent, keep their knowledge and skills up to date, establish and maintain good relationships with patients and colleagues, are honest and trustworthy, and act with integrity.”

I am sure patients need good doctors and dentists. The criteria of good and professional doctors and dentists as I mentioned above, is
indeed our obligation to meet this expectation and demand. **This is how we uphold our image, integrity and dignity as a highly professional consultants, doctors and dentists.**

*Therefore, we must always ask and remind ourselves....*

1) *Am I a good doctor?*

2) *Am I a good dentist?*

3) *Am I working professionally?*

[ *I let you answer these questions.* ]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. **Another critical factor, essential to quality clinical care and good clinical practice, is communication.** Good and effective communication is one of the cornerstones of good medical practice. For most practitioners, the intention to give good medical care is not in doubt. Recently in 2013 the Ministry of Health has conducted several customer satisfaction surveys, through the Department of Policy and Planning as well as the Department of Medical Services and Health Services monitor complaints received from patients and the public. It is very clear indeed that the findings of the survey show a significant number of complaints are either directly caused by poor communication alone or poor communication has made some contribution to the causation of the event leading to the complaint or made it worse. **To resolve such complaint, it is**
your duty and responsibilities to change your mindset to improve and upscale the importance of good communication skills in becoming a good communicator.

17. Let me quote another extract from the Good Medical and Dental Practice which stresses the importance of good communication,

“Relationships based on openness, trust and good communication will enable you to work in partnership with your patients to address their individual needs”.

Ultimately as consultants, doctors and dentists, this is all that you should aspire to.

18. The importance of good communication between yourselves as doctors and your patients must never be forgotten or neglected, even when you are at your busiest. Patients often equate eye-to-eye contact between themselves and their doctor as a sign that the doctor cares for them and is paying close attention to their problems. This is sometimes difficult to do when you may be busy entering data and information into the BruHIMS system at the same time. I am fully aware that this is a dilemma we are facing and such complaint the Ministry received. This is probably so what most of you experienced. However, I wish to remind everyone here regarding the paramount importance of paying proper attention and good interaction with your patients to spend
the time talking and explaining to them nicely despite your very busy schedules and commitment, whether related to BruHIMS or not. I am sure the patient will be much happier and more comfortable because they feel they are properly well taken care.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. The Ministry of Health is very mindful of the current challenging situation we are all facing now which is the implementation of BruHIMS. We understand that not only you are busy with your clinical workload but you have to adapt to the BruHIMS system at the same time. However, I am sure you will agree with me that we cannot go back to the manual and conventional system. We can only go forward and be dynamic, otherwise we will be left far behind by not following the advances of info-communication technologies (ICT). Please bear in mind that BruHIMS is our first e-health system, and we have only just embarked on it, beginning in Tutong District in August 2012, moving to Belait District in December 2012 and then to the Brunei Muara District starting at Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital in Mei 2013, which means BruHIMS has only been in place just over 16 months.

20. I have been informed that the experience from users in implementing and adopting e-health systems in other countries have shared with us that it took them several years. In some cases as
much as ten years, after further customisation, rectifications and continuous ongoing modifications to be made to their system, in order to improve and make the system eventually more user-friendly, more efficient, more effective and robust. **In this matter the Ministry of Health is fully committed to work together with the vendors, system developer and also relevant stakeholders to continuously review and improve all of its functions, within the earliest possible time. On your part as our users, we do expect your continuous feedback on issues such as lagging incidences or any other problems so that these can be recorded, monitored and properly resolved. In this regard, I appeal to the public to be patient and give full cooperation during this transition period of moving from the conventional setting towards this new e-health system. At the same time, I also seek your full understanding, cooperation, perseverance, patience and commitment to ensure the success of this long-awaited e-health project a reality which eventually benefits both the patients and the healthcare services to be more effective and efficient. I am very sure this is what everyone of us is looking forward to. Am I right?**

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. Since I have been appointed as the Minister of Health, I have had the opportunity to visit, interact and discuss with many of you in your
workplace settings. I am continuously impressed and appreciate your commitment, diligence, and how proactive and innovative some of you are in developing your own services and department. Therefore, I personally encourage those of you who have succeeded in developing innovations or implementing creative ideas, to share these ideas with others, so that the whole organisation can learn and benefit from it. **Together as a strong cohesive team, we will continue to move forward to enhance the quality of our services for the benefit and wellbeing of our people and nation.**

22. The Ministry of Health has more than 6000 staff. Our health professionals from the Medical, Health and Dental make up less than ten percent (10%) of the total workforce. Yet this relatively small proportion represents the backbone of the Ministry of Health. Apart from other health professionals, the quality of our consultants, doctors and dentists is therefore pivotal to the success or failure of the Ministry. **Public health, safety and patients’ outcomes greatly depend on how well you can deliver your services. Please be assured that just like yourselves, patient safety is also our utmost priority and must never be compromised. Whether you are working in hospitals, health centres, clinics or in public health, patients’ lives and wellbeing are dependent on you. You, our consultants, doctors and dentists are integral to the success of the Ministry, we need you to be on board with us.**
23. The Ministry of Health needs your active support and participation. This is especially so with the new and attractive scheme of service for doctors, whom some of you are in the process of migration and waiting approval from appropriate authority. Some of you have been approved and received the benefits of being in the new scheme of service for doctors. I hope those of you who are still waiting for approval, I assure you that the Ministry of Health is taking care and trying our best to expedite and resolve the outstanding issues and queries from appropriate authority. In recognising your specialty and expertise, the Government of His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam and I personally and sincerely hope that with the new attractive scheme of services, our consultants, doctors and dentists should be more committed, more responsible, more innovative and make more effort to contribute in providing better quality services.

[This is what I am looking forward to and expect from all of you.]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

24. In our line of work, the Ministry of Health organises many events and activities which support our core functions and responsibilities. In this regards, I still yet to see more participation and support from
our consultants, doctors and dentists to these events. As a public servant and a health professional, you need to interact more with the community at the grass-root level through our outreach programme not only to show our commitment outside the clinical setting but also to enrich our knowledge with the surroundings as well as to build up more public confidence.

25. Tonight, you are given the opportunity to convey your opinions, feedback and suggestions with regards to your work issues and challenges. I hope this session will be very interactive, truthful and transparent as possible. Please keep an open mind and do provide suggestions and options for improvement. I will take your comments whether they are positive or negative. Indeed, your comments are made with the ultimate aim for strengthening our efforts, suggestive ways or how we ALL can work together to move forward in order to achieve the further success towards our Ministry’s Vision 2035: “Together Towards A Healthy Nation”.

26. Before I end my speech, allow me again to emphasise to you, always perform your duties in the most professional, caring and compassionate manner, always be highly disciplined in carrying out your duties, abide to Brunei Darussalam’s own codes of medical ethics and follow clinical practices which are standardised and compliant to international quality standards. At the same time, let us also not lose sight of the local traditions of Malay Islamic Monarchy that is to uphold respect for others and to maintain our integrity. I
am sure with your talent, coupled with commitment, dedication, highly discipline, creativity, innovation, strong teamwork and given the right support, together we can achieve Brunei’s Wawasan 2035 and the Ministry’s Vision.

I like to take this opportunity to wish our Chinese colleagues – ‘Gong Xi Fa Cai’. May the year of the horse bring prosperity, good fortune and happiness. Just like the horse, I hope all of you work very hard for the great success of the Ministry.

Thank you.