

PERSONALITY FOCUS: A JOURNEY OF AN OCULOPLASTIC SURGEON**Dr Radzlian bin Othman**

A man who had contributed significantly towards the field of oculoplastics in Malaysia, having served the Ministry of Health, Malaysia for 33 years, of which 17 years were as an oculoplastic surgeon. He retired from the government services in November 2020 and is currently enjoying his hard-earned retirement with his family.

Early Life and Background

Dr Radzlian was born in Perlis. Since his father was a police officer, his family was required to move around the country. Thus, most of his childhood was spent in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur. He was the youngest of three siblings. He completed his secondary education at the Victoria Institution, Kuala Lumpur. He then pursued USM matriculation programme and joined the medical faculty of Universiti Sains Malaysia. He graduated with a medical degree in 1987.

**Medical school days...****What made you choose medicine as a profession?**

Becoming a doctor was never my ambition. It was only after my MCE and upon joining the matriculation programme that I decided to try medicine. I like the idea of a non-office-based work, to learn about diseases and the ability to help others.

Career in Ophthalmology

Dr Radzlian did housemanship at the HTAR Klang. When he was a medical officer at the Out Patient Department of Hospital Besar Kuala Lumpur, he befriended a Medical Assistant named Andi who worked in the ophthalmology department. He persuaded Dr Radzlian to go for a post graduate training in Ophthalmology.

What made you choose Ophthalmology as your passion?

I see ophthalmology as a well-rounded discipline. It is both surgical based and medical based. I am able to treat adult as well as paediatric patients. I applied and was accepted for the UKM's Master of Surgery (Ophthalmology). I joined the Master Programme in April 1991. There were ten trainees in my batch and I was the only one who joined without any experience in Ophthalmology. I had to start from scratch. I did not know how to use the slit lamp, let alone the indirect ophthalmoscope. It was difficult but I had good teachers right from the beginning.

Journey in Oculoplastics

Dr Radzlian underwent subspecialty training in Oculoplastic Surgery in the United Kingdom at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and the Addenbrooke's Hospital Cambridge. After completion, he was posted to Hospital Selayang while providing session based Oculoplastic Services to Hospital Putrajaya. He was transferred to start and head the Ophthalmology Department in Hospital Serdang in 2005 where he was also tasked to set up the National Oculoplastic Center which later became the Oculoplastics Excellence Center.



The first oculoplastic surgery and team in Hospital Serdang

What do you enjoy most about being an oculoplastic surgeon?

Firstly, there is a varied scope and fascinating diseases and procedures. There are plenty of procedure that one can do, which I love. In doing procedures, I am allowed to use my creativity. My passion has always been the orbit. It encompassed pathologies like fractures, tumours, inflammatory lesions, vascular lesions and foreign body. There are various approaches in performing orbitotomy or orbital reconstruction. At times, it can be a tense and anxious moment like when doing a biopsy of the optic nerve lesion, excision of large orbital tumours and deep seated orbital lesions. Doing bony orbital decompression can be taxing but it is rewarding.



Endoscopic DCR course in collaboration with ORL department

What is your advice to those interested in pursuing oculoplastics as a subspecialty?

First is to ensure that you really love the field of oculoplastic surgery. Do research on oculoplastic surgery by reading up journals or even from the internet. Youtube is also helpful. Get a basic oculoplastic surgery book and see if it fascinates you. Talk to the Oculoplastic surgeons or to the fellows undergoing training and get their advice. It is good to spend some time at the oculoplastic clinics or attend the surgical theatres. Do attend seminars or conferences on oculoplastics. If you find this subspecialty interesting, you can use your creativity and develop your own art.

What are some of the challenges often faced by fellows training to be oculoplastic surgeons?

They may not have enough exposure and some may also lack supervision as there is also a lack of trainers and training centers. It would be good if a trainee can be posted to various trainers. Most of the trainees just what to cut. However, many do not possess adequate oculoplastic knowledge. Trainees need to update their knowledge. A trainee needs to have greater understanding of aetiology of problems. When doing a procedure, a trainee need to know the aim and the principle of the procedure. They need to be more proactive. For an example, when in the operating theatre; fellows should come prepared with knowledge regarding the procedure even if they have not seen one before. This will help them to learn more efficiently. Co-management is also an aspect the trainees need to master.

What is the current status of oculoplastics sub-specialty in Malaysia and how can it be improved?

It is still at a young stage. Although, there is a steady increase in the number of oculoplastic surgeons over the years, the number is still inadequate. More over, the oculoplastic surgeons are not evenly distributed throughout the country. There is still lack of availability of oculoplastic services to the general public. Despite this, there is good networking between the local oculoplastic surgeons. We need to encourage more doctors to take up oculoplastic

subspecialty. Having said that, we are progressing. In Malaysia, there is now a group called Malaysian Oculoplastic Interest Group, MOIG. This interest group has succeeded in organising Oculoplastic conferences in 2019 and 2020 which was well received.

Malaysian oculoplastic surgeons now sit amongst the committee members of the Asia-Pacific Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, APSOPRS. Malaysian oculoplastic surgeons have also been invited to present at international conferences and we will be seeing more progress among oculoplastic surgeons in the world arena with time.



Receiving the lifetime achievement award by MOIG from the MSO President



**DR PREMALA DEVI
SIVAGURUNATHAN**

Vitreo-retina Fellow
Hospital Selayang