The concept of emergency medical health care systems in Malaysia has existed since the 1950s. As in other countries in Asia, their functions and important contributions to the overall healthcare system have been much underestimated compared to other specialties. Historically, the concept of prehospital care management was almost non-existent and the casualty (accident & emergency department) was considered as a dumping place for under-performed medical officers. Postgraduate training in Emergency Medicine in Malaysia is still at its infancy and a lot more effort is required to improve the training program. The establishment of a structured residency training program and certified emergency physicians have revolutionized the emergency services that were neglected for so many years. Many challenges have been encountered since the start of the first program but each of the problems was tackled with great enthusiasm. It is hoped that in time Emergency Medicine and emergency health care in the country would be placed equal or even higher than any other specialty. (Hong Kong J Emerg Med. 2005;12:246-251)

Keywords: Emergency medical services, medical education, physicians, professional education

Introduction

Emergency Medicine is a relatively new specialty still at its infancy but is rapidly expanding in Malaysia. The specialty is being increasingly recognised within the health care system in the country. It follows the Anglo-American model of emergency care. This article reviews the overall health care system in Malaysia, as well as the development of Emergency Medicine and its postgraduate training in the local medical school as a new specialty. It also describes the challenges in program development, emergency patient care, and emergency medicine management systems. In 1998 the first structured academic postgraduate training programs were introduced by one of the local medical schools. This provides a good model for the future development of emergency medicine programs in other institutions in Malaysia.