This article briefly reviews the development of emergency medicine (EM) in Hong Kong with particular focus on the parallel development of training in EM at the undergraduate level. The practice of EM in Hong Kong started more than 50 years ago but the development of the specialty progressed slowly until the 1980s. Since then, although there have been major advances in postgraduate training, the specialty still features poorly in undergraduate medical training. We compared emergency medicine training in Hong Kong, Australia, USA, UK and Singapore, in order to identify areas in the medical curriculum where EM could contribute more to undergraduate medical training. The growth of EM in Hong Kong depends on recruiting good trainees who are attracted by what they observe and what they learn during their undergraduate EM clerkship. (Hong Kong j.emerg.med. 2006;13:178-184)

Keywords: Medical education, professional education, undergraduate medical education

Introduction

What is emergency medicine? The International Federation for Emergency Medicine (IFEM) defined emergency medicine (EM) in 1991 as "a field of practice based on the knowledge and skills required for the prevention, diagnosis and management of acute and urgent aspects of illness and injury affecting patients of all age groups with a full spectrum of undifferentiated physical and behavioural disorders. It further encompasses an understanding of the development of pre-hospital and in-hospital emergency medical systems and the skills necessary for this development".1

The practice in different places even in the developed world varies considerably. In this article, we seek to compare the undergraduate EM training in five regions in Asia and the rest of the world. Of those areas studied, all are members of IFEM who share the same definition of EM and recognise EM as an independent specialty.

A brief history of emergency medicine in Hong Kong
The development of emergency medicine in Hong Kong dates back to 1947 when Queen Mary Hospital,