

HEALTH RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT UNIT (HRDU)

Dear Editor,

The Health Research Development Unit (HRDU) was established at the end of 1996 with the objective of promoting Health Research. This new unit will be under the Dean's office having one of the deputy deans (Research and Development) as head. In one swoop the unit undertakes to maintain the work of the Department of Social Obstetrics from whom the core professional staff is derived and create a new focus for health research in the country. This is an important development to co-ordinate research in this area to meet the challenges that the current stage of development in the health sector. As we know, the health sector is an expanding industry with the availability of modern technology, rise in standard of living, longevity of life and other problems that can be linked to change of life-style.

The Faculty of Medicine and the University Hospital has an abundance of facilities and resources in terms of highly qualified and experienced specialists to contribute to aspects of health mentioned earlier and their energies can be better co-ordinated and utilised to the maximum. HRDU will focus on applied health-related research, health policy analysis, development of medical education and health professional training. It will draw upon activities conducted by various individual researchers and research groups within the Faculty of Medicine, in University of Malaya and other institutions as well as those generated by the unit itself. It will work closely with Faculty groups already active in related areas such as those in the Departments of Social and Preventive Medicine, Primary Care Medicine etc. In focusing on health-related research and policy issues, the HRDU will give attention to the conduct and utilisation of research efforts that are multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary in scope recognising the importance of sociological, economic and demographic dimensions related to health and health care.

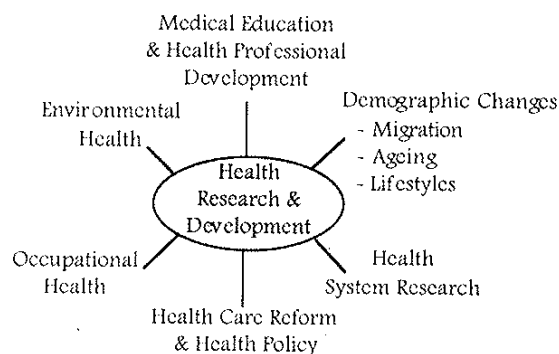
Areas of activities include:

1. conducting health systems and health policy research, monitoring health outcomes, analysing health impact of socio-economic and demographic changes and utilising research findings to enable the faculty to assist the gov-

ernment and non-government organisations in formulating policies and programmes related to health;

2. contributing to medical education and health professional training and development - under and post-graduate medical curriculum, especially in preventive and promotional health, and providing input into health issues to other related academic programmes, such as demography and medical sociology;
3. carrying out health-related consultancies locally and regionally;
4. developing and monitoring collaborative efforts in health prevention projects or strategies, notably community-based interventions;
5. providing short-term training and in-service courses to professional and para-medical professionals in selected areas of the Medical Centre's expertise.

The research agenda could best be shown diagrammatically as below -



Teaching commitments to the undergraduate will continue:

- Health Systems Stage 4 (S) KLDP Posting
- Human Sexuality Stage 4 (S) O & G Posting
- Social Aspects of pregnancy Stage 4 (J) O & G Posting
- Behavioural Sciences Stage 2 Core Curriculum

The core academic staff can contribute to post-graduate teaching and staff development in areas such as reproductive health, political economy, research methodologies in survey research, health systems research, qualitative and ethnographic techniques etc.

Plans are in place to set up a consultancy service in light of the corporatisation of the university and the need to generate income. Collaborative networks with various academic, government and NGOs as well as relevant international bodies will be established and current links will be strengthened. These include linkages with WHO, UNFPA, UNEP and APACPH.

Since its inception HRDU core staff are avidly involved in several IRPA funded projects such as Health Problems of Foreign Workers, Case Mix Study. The visiting professor to the unit, Professor M Miller has been able to impart his experience and expertise to the development of the latter. Along with staff from the Social and Preventive Medicine, Medicine, Faculty of Science, IMR a

course in Health Research attended by UM staff as well as some from outside the university. Three of the modules have been done:

- Principles of Scientific Inquiry and Research Design in Health Research
- Basic Measurement and Statistical Methods
- Grant Proposals and Scientific Writing,

Others to follow will include:

- Data Management and Analysis
 - Clinical Trials and clinical Epidemiology
- Programme Evaluation and Outcomes Research

It is stressed that this unit derives its strength from collaboration with others and we will continue to strive for more research output from the faculty coming out of our combined effort.

Amir S Khir

Deputy Dean
Research & Development
Head, HRDU