Datin Dr Catherine Lamplugh @ Datin Dr Hjh Kathrina Abdullah, was the first state obstetrician and gynaecologist who with the assistance of her juniors single-handedly took care of welfare of Bruneian women, their deliveries, and their gynaecological problems in the sixties and seventies until Datin Dr Ranjeet Sidhu joined the service in 1978. This eased the workload considerably.

Datin Catherine Lamplugh, a Yorkshire lass joined the Brunei Healthcare service in 1963 and was the third Specialist to be based in the Brunei General Hospital. Prior to this, the obstetric and gynaecological welfare of the women were looked after by Dr Martinez, a medical officer from the Philippines.

Datin Catherine Lamplugh was very dedicated but was strict with colleagues, nurses, patients and relatives. Despite her strict nature, she always put the patients’ welfare first above all. Accounts from her colleagues, Dato Peter Hart was that she was a friendly and easygoing person. She was also described as reserved and kept very much to herself in the seventies. Despite this, her colleagues and nurses respected her.

Datin Catherine Lamplugh married Yusof Hj Lamin, a Malaysian surveyor stationed in Brunei. She met him when they were both staying at the government rest-house located near Kianggeh River in Pekan Brunei. This rest-house is still in use. Datin Lamplugh embraced the Islamic faith and took her chosen name of Kathrina Abdullah. They were blessed with a son who was delivered by caesarian section performed Pehin Ian Harris, then the only State Surgeon. Under the leadership of Datin Lamplugh with the help of her team consisting of junior doctors, nurses and midwives (all women), significant improvements were made in the healthcare delivery to women and their obstetric and gynaecological problems.

Datin Lamplugh retired from the service after working for more than thirty years and returned to the home town of her husband, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. Datin Lamplugh passed away in February 2009.

Historical Perspective

Healthcare Pioneers: Datin Catherine Lamplugh

Guest editor: Dato Samuel Yapp Kai San (Senior Consultant Surgeon, RIPAS Hospital).

Based on interview with Dato Peter Hart and Sister Rachel