



Editorial Message

We entered the year of 2020 with COVID-19 affecting some parts of the world. For such a small creature, we didn't expect the problem to escalate so fast and so BIG. And yet it happened.

- ❖ Academic activities put on hold
- ❖ Conferences cancelled or postponed (MSPP Scientific Meeting included!)
- ❖ Newsletter was late in publishing (yes... I know... this newsletter is late...)

In addition to the worries of contracting the disease, everyone was apprehensive whether life can resume its normal course. After months go by, life resumes but with twists and turns. We have started to adapt and embrace the new norm. The COVID-19 crisis taught us how to do the usual things the unusual way. Just like the COVID-19 which mutated and able to thrive in undesirable environment, we too must 'mutate' and withstand these challenges.

Before the MCO was put on us, MSPP managed to organize Health Screening activity in conjunction with Physiology Fun Run 2.0 in February 2020. We also managed to organize a webinar on Exercise and Health in August 2020. We hope to have similar activities for the benefit of all members. Stay tune for upcoming activities and in the meantime, stay safe.

~Norazlina Mohamed~

MSPP membership

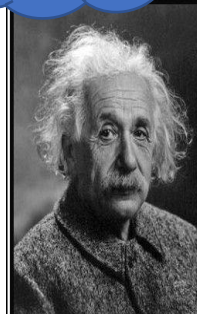
MSPP is 219 strong.

167 ordinary members

52 life members

- Invite your friends and colleagues to join us
- For more details:
<http://mspp.com.my/membership>

Quote of the day...



If we knew what we were doing it wouldn't be research.

(Albert Einstein)

izquotes.com

Be a contributor for MSPP Newsletter.

Send your articles/write-up to us: mspp.secretariat@gmail.com



Physiology Fun Run and Health Screening 2020

Physiology Fun Run 2.0 was organized by the Department of Physiology Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), co-organised with MSPP. The event was held at Botanical Garden, Kuala Lumpur on 29th February 2020.

During this event, MSPP co-organized several activities such as health screening and health demonstrations in collaboration with various agencies and associations including Maternofetal and Embryo Research Group (MatE), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysian Nurses Association Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur Branch, Malaysian Red Crescent Society UiTM Branch and UiTM Nurses Student Association Selangor Branch. The health screening program was also led by two UiTM faculties, namely the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Health Sciences.

The health screening which started 8.00 am included investigations such as measurement of height and weight, BMI count, blood pressure check, blood sugar test, body fat screening and healthy mind screening test.

A total of 8 staff and students from the Faculty of Medicine and 21 staff and students from the Faculty of Health Sciences together provided services in the field.

Prof. Dr Nor Ashikin Mohamed Noor Khan
Chairperson



Exercise is the key not only to physical health but to peace of mind.

— Nelson Mandela —

MSPP Webinar Siri 1: Exercise and Health

On 22nd August 2020 (10-11am), MSPP organised a community outreach webinar entitled Exercise and Health. This webinar was conducted via Zoom platform.

Two panelists were invited to share tips on exercise. The first panelist, Dr Nor Farah Mohamad Fauzi from the Faculty of Health Sciences, UKM spoke on Secrets to Health in Exercise (Rahsia Kesihatan di Sebalik Senaman). This was followed by demonstration of simple exercises that can be performed at home by Assoc Prof Zulkifli Abdul Kadir from the Faculty of Sport Science & Recreation, UiTM.

The webinar was well received, with a total of 115 registered participants comprising members of academic institutions and the general public. Participants provided positive feedback and suggested for MSPP to continue with the community outreach webinar series.

*Prof Dr Nor Ashikin Mohamed Noor Khan
Coordinator, MSPP Webinar*



Experiencing the New Norm

I am truly grateful that I invested in several courses and software of online teaching since I started teaching full-time after finishing my postgraduate study around four years ago. Therefore, my transition from face to face teaching & learning (T&L) to online went smoothly. During the MCO period, I shared feedback with students as well as lecturers on how to ensure all students get access to the T&L materials. The feedback sharing activities opened my eyes to see the struggle of some students adapting to online T&L method. One of the main struggles that some students faced is low internet connection. On top of that, some only have smartphone to rely on for their online T&L. Thus, I tried my best to create many platforms to distribute my online T&L, which include Telegram channel, UiTM LMS site (i-learn.uitm.edu.my) and Microsoft SharePoint, so that all student can access the T&L materials. Alhamdulillah, students who have internet or gadget limitation managed to get through all T&L materials when various platform were used.

Online T&L will continue to be relevant in the post-MCO period, even though it can't replace some important face-to-face T&L such as practical sessions and clinical examinations. So, it is best for us as an academician to equip ourselves with the pedagogy/andragogy of online learning.

*Dr. Nurul Alimah Abdul Nasir,
Senior Lecturer
Department of Pharmacology,
Faculty of Medicine, UiTM*

I felt fortunate to be part of Jeffrey Cheah School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Monash University Malaysia as it is on forefront of technology and evolving teaching and learning modalities. In addition, courses such as Foundation in Teaching (FIT) and Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GCHE) which I completed in 2018, equipped me with technologies and strategies for enhanced student learning experiences. During MCO, delivering lectures was one of the biggest challenges. The pharmacology team decided to record new lectures for the benefit of the student with recent updates on the topics and upload on the Moodle platform which student will have access to as and when they want. We tried our best to restrict most of the lecture recording to a maximum of 40-45 minutes with the use of embedded videos to make lectures interesting.

Another challenge was active learning sessions. The Pharmacology active learning sessions were delivered as face-to-face activity in previous years. In the view of the COVID -19 situation, the pharmacology team which consists of myself, Dr. Kyi Kyi Tha and Dr. Amudha Kadirvelu had transformed these active learning sessions into completely online activity. The team had considered various issues like long & tiring zoom sessions, online connectivity, international students, and different time zones etc., which potentially might affect effective learning. The pharmacology team communicated and discussed remotely through emails, zoom meetings, shared documents to design the session, and with peer feedback to improve the design, lesson plan, and questions. The learning activities were carefully selected and designed to fulfil the learning objectives. The sessions were designed as asynchronous learning activity on google forms platform. The students were allowed to learn at their own pace with repeat access. A session started with a short video of an overview of the topic followed by a set of online exercises.

The academic team was impressed with the students' full engagement and received several positive feedbacks.

*Dr. Mohd Farooq Shaikh
Senior Lecturer (Pharmacology),
Jeffrey Cheah School of Medicine and Health Sciences,
Monash University Malaysia*

“
Online learning is not
the next big thing; it is
the now big thing.
”

- Donna J. Abernathy

Experiencing the New Norm

COVID-19 has affected nearly every aspect of normal life, including education. In UKM, online learning has been implemented to ensure that the academic session continues with the new norm. All teaching and learning activities have been conducted online instead of face to face sessions. Besides that, for the first time, UKM has conducted its final semester examination using an online platform, UKMFolio, the varsity's learning management system. The lecturers and students have been exposed to how the examination would be presented in the interface and the entire process in UKMFolio before the examination. At the same time, UKM also prepared a contingency plan for students with weak or no internet connections. Meanwhile, for research, all postgraduate students have resumed their research activities with the new norm, and they are required to follow all the guidelines that have been issued by the university to ensure the highest level of safety and security is practiced at all times.

*Dr. Mohd Helmy Mokhtar,
Physiology Department,
Faculty of Medicine, UKM*

Moving from traditional to online teaching and learning (T&L) is a big move, at least in my personal point of view. In principle, regardless of which methods the lecturer chooses, the essence of the core knowledge must be successfully delivered to the students. Physiology is a complex and jargon heavy subject that is full of explanation by nature. Therefore, the lecturer must be able to provide a thorough understanding to the students through interactive approaches in T&L.

During the Movement Control Order (MCO), I applied a few T&L methods in my Physiology subjects including lectures, tutorials, and Problem-Based Learning. Like any other universities, UPM has its own learning management system called Putrablast that is used as an online educational platform to connect and interact with the students. Additionally, I also used Zoom, Webex, Google Meet and Google Classroom applications for my real-time online classes and discussions with the students. In addition to the T&L classes, I have had a chance to conduct online examination. We used the Google Meet application to proctor the students during real-time examination. As for the exam questions, we used Testmoz.com and Exam.net as a platform for students to answer their exam questions.

Although we are in year 2020, there are still some students who cannot afford to own a computer or a laptop. Student's internet connection and coverage are also the biggest challenge during online classes. With these challenges, they easily disconnected from their online classes and negatively impacted their learning experiences. Nevertheless, online T&L offers seamless and borderless educational learning as long as there is a stable internet connection and good coverage and accessibility. Having said that, there are still room for improvements that we can address to cater students' needs in order to design our T&L approaches to be future-proof and future ready.

*Dr. Hafizah Abdul Hamid,
Lecturer of Medical Physiology,
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UPM*

“Technology will not replace great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.”

George Couros

World's Pharmacology/Physiology News

Pharmacology News: Antibodies Against COVID-19



A new study by researchers at MassBiologics of UMass Medical School published in Nature Communications suggests that COVID specific IgA monoclonal

antibodies may provide effective immunity in the respiratory system against the novel coronavirus – a potentially critical feature of an effective vaccine.

Yang Wang, MD, PhD, deputy director for product discovery at MassBiologics and associate professor of medicine, and colleagues describe the discovery and characterization of a cross-reactive human monoclonal antibody (MAB) to SARS-CoV-2 spike proteins which blocks ACE2 receptor binding on the mucosal tissue of the respiratory tract – potentially preventing or limiting SARS-CoV-2 infection causing COVID-19 disease.

Excerpt from an article published in Science Daily. " Antibodies that may protect against COVID-19", 24 August 2020.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/08/200824110122.htm>

Physiology News: Loss of smell due to coronavirus



The loss of smell that can accompany coronavirus is unique and different from that experienced by someone with a bad cold or flu, say European researchers who have studied the experiences of patients.

Lead investigator Prof Carl Philpott, from the University of East Anglia, carried out smell and taste tests on 30 volunteers: 10 with Covid-19, 10 with bad colds and 10 healthy people with no cold or flu symptoms. Smell loss was much more profound in the Covid-19 patients. They were less able to identify smells, and they were not able to discern bitter or sweet tastes at all.

Prof Andrew Lane is an expert in nose and sinus problems at Johns Hopkins University in the US. He and his team have been studying tissue samples from the back of the nose to understand how coronavirus might cause loss of smell and have published the findings in the European Respiratory Journal.

They identified extremely high levels of an enzyme which were present only in the area of the nose responsible for smelling. This enzyme, called ACE-2 (angiotensin converting enzyme II), is thought to be the "entry point" that allows coronavirus to get into the cells of the body and cause an infection.

Excerpt from an article published in BBC News Online. "Coronavirus smell loss 'different from cold and flu'", 19 August 2020.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-53810610>.

LOCKDOWN LAUGHS

by Varsha Sheth

