



The progress of bariatric surgery in Malaysia

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Delegates to the 81st Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told that while bariatric surgery is a proven treatment for obesity, it is yet to achieve popular acceptance in Malaysia.

Dr Eng Hong Pok, a General Surgeon and lecturer in the Department of Surgery at the University of Malaysia, told delegates of a study involving 11 surgeons practising bariatric surgery in Malaysia. Nine of these surgeons responded to an online questionnaire asking them about their practice.

The study revealed that 10 hospitals in Malaysia offer a bariatric surgical service and that 66 per cent of cases are performed in the government setting. Bariatric surgeons routinely offering the service have an average four years' experience. Most surgeons preferred gastric banding and sleeve gastrectomy, while only 3 surgeons offer gastric bypass as the primary procedure of choice.

Dr Pok estimated the total number of cases performed per year at 140. He said the estimated procedure cost is RM 500-5000 in government hospitals and RM 25,000-30,000 in the private setting.

He noted that most surgeons are using Body Mass Index (BMI) with co-morbidities as the selection criteria.

"The adoption of bariatric surgery is still a relatively slow process in Malaysia," Dr Pok concluded.

"Only hospitals with qualified and experienced laparoscopic surgeons are routinely offering these procedures. The limited surgical training opportunities, limited public awareness and the lack of insurance coverage for obesity are factors hindering the progress of this surgery," he said.

This year's ASC, with the theme 'The Making of a Surgeon', runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. Approximately 2,500 delegates from Australia, New Zealand and around the world are attending.

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