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CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY 5.0 AND AMSA HEALTH DAY: THE FIRST STUDENT-LED FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AFTER COVID-19

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The medical students and the medical fraternity have always been very close to the community. Sekretariat Mahasiswa Fakulti, Fakulti Perubatan (SMF) has been consistently and actively involved in community engagements in the past years. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a halt to student-led face-to-face (FTF) community engagements. In 2020 and 2021, most community engagements are canceled or held entirely online. Although an online program may have the potential of having more participants as they are not limited to a specific geographical location, the participation would depend on the ability of the participants to join the online program.

It could restrict engagements with certain special groups in the community, such as those in institutions with limited access to WIFI and computers, the mentally challenged and those with financial problems. Online engagements are also limited and lack the human touch. With the change in Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and students being able to return to the campus, SMF had wasted no time in arranging an FTF community program.

On the 19th of March 2022, a volunteering community programme called Connecting Our Community 5.0 (COC 5.0) and AMSA Health Day was held at the Pusat Sehenti Bina Diri (PSBD), Kompleks Penyayang Bakti (KPB) Sungai Buloh. PSBD is an institution under the Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat Malaysia. It caters to the needs of the homeless. It took months for the team to plan the visit with multiple hiccups due to the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing the event to be pushed from weeks to months. The program advisor, Dr. Ilham Ameera Ismail, was also down with COVID-19 just a few days before it was scheduled. However, the team never gave up and pushed against all odds to make the event a reality.



The program was held for an entire day from 8.00 a.m. until 6.00 p.m. and attended by 21 medical students. The program director was Mohamad Aiman Bin Mazlan, a year-1 medical student. Everyone was excited about the program, especially for year 1, as it was their first program since they returned to the campus. For the rest, it was the first FTF program in two years. The opening ceremony went smoothly, and the first activity was a morning exercise by the aerobics team. The participants were later divided into groups consisting of students and 3 to 4 residents of the institution. Students talked to the residents and listened to their life stories.

At the same time, the mural team consisting of 4 students, started their mission of painting a mural on the walls of one of the rooms used for watching TV and resting by the residents. Other activities throughout the day include cake making and decoration competition, oral hygiene demonstration and “dam haji” competition.

At the end of the volunteering program, the students learned important lessons and gained valuable experience handling an FTF community program. They came back with renewed vigor to be a better person, to have empathy and determined to interact more with the outside world. One of the students said that the best part of being in medical school is not graduating as a doctor (even though it is ultimately what each student aims for) but learning to be a better person.

