

## **Bridging Government-private Sectors Through Surgical Outsourcing: A Sarawak Tertiary Centre Experience In Managing Backlog Cases Post COVID-19**

**Hanis AL**, Adibah A, Rokayah J

*Department of General Surgery, Sarawak General Hospital, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia*

**Introduction:** Whilst the dynamic of the government and the private sector remained different in serving the health interest of the public, this narrative was forever changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A global study by the CovidSurg collaborative estimated a backlog of 151 717 surgeries in Malaysian hospitals during a 12-week period of hospital services disruption, which includes cancellation of elective cases, limited bed availability and a waiting period of one year for surgery for benign cases. In order to alleviate these burdens, the Government had begun outsourcing surgical services to private hospitals.

**Aim:** This is an audit on the cases outsourced to private hospitals in the year 2021 and 2022 from our centre.

**Methods:** General surgical cases outsourced to private hospitals from the year 2021 and 2022 were obtained and analysed. Types of procedures, nature of operations (elective or emergency) and nature of case (benign or malignant) were recorded.

**Results:** A total number of 230 cases were outsourced for both years. In 2021, 166 cases (72%) were outsourced consisting of multiple surgical services with 17 cases (7.4%) were emergency cases and 149 (64.8%) elective cases. Comparatively, in 2022, a total number of only 64 cases (27.8%) were outsourced focusing only on four major surgical operations, which were thyroidectomy, mastectomy, cholecystectomy and hernioplasty. These cases were purely elective cases and out of these 64 cases, 41 cases (64%) were benign in nature. Lesser cases were being outsourced in 2022 as the backlog cases were cleared up with no emergency cases done in 2022 as the recovery period began.

**Conclusion:** The facilities and expertise provided by the private sectors were able to reduce the number of backlog cases. Inter-hospital collaborations, between public and private sectors, had proven to be instrumental in mitigating the surgical services disruption due to the pandemic.