



NEWS RELEASE

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Paramedic Training Programme at the School of Military Medicine

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INTRODUCTION

The SAF's regular medics currently undergo three levels of training: Combat Medic, Specialist I and Specialist II courses. Whilst being able to handle trauma related conditions such as haemorrhage control, shock and fluid resuscitation, and assist the Medical Officer in performing emergency medical procedures, it was felt that much could be done to upgrade their skill levels especially in the areas of advanced resuscitation procedures and in handling other medical(non-trauma) emergencies. For purposes of increasing their clinical competency, operational capability and professionalism, the upgrading of all combat medic courses with the introduction of paramedic training to all the three levels of courses and an additional fourth course, the Advanced Paramedic Course, was proposed. The Paramedic Academy of British Columbia, Canada, was engaged as the Consultants for the review and development of SMM's training curriculum.

THE PARAMEDIC SYSTEM

This is a well established and proven system in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. The system trains the individual to perform advanced resuscitation procedures independently. SMM will be the first agency providing this level of training in Singapore and the ASEAN region. Upon upgrading their current courses, SMM will be able to train a senior medic to perform more advanced life-saving procedures in peacetime and in war. It will render the experienced combat medic capable of independent life saving procedures in conditions of extreme emergency without the doctor necessarily being present. He will also be better able to assist and complement the Medical Officer in the management of casualties.

PARAMEDIC TRAINING CURRICULUM AND SCHEDULE

The curriculum and syllabus will include three levels as follows:

Level 1: Paramedic Basic Level

- Basic Health Sciences
- Assessment of a casualty
- Systematic approach to Casualty Aid

Level 2: Paramedic Intermediate Level

- Knowledge Depth
- Clinical experience

Level 3: Paramedic Qualification Level

- Specialised knowledge in trauma and medical emergencies

Level 4: Paramedic Advanced Level

- Advanced Resuscitation Skills
- Each level will include classroom instructions, practical skill training and hospital / ambulance service on-the-job training. The duration of each level is 10-12 weeks. The first three levels comprised upgrading components of the existing courses in SMM viz. Combat Medic Course, Combat Medic Specialist I and II courses respectively.

The syllabi of the three levels training are designed to train the medic to not only meet the SAF's enhanced operational requirements but also to operate at various levels in an emergency situation, including civilian settings. SAF is now assisting the SCDF in training the paramedics for the national emergency ambulance system. SMM has open its doors to A&E staff from MOH and the hospitals. Training of paramedics by a single agency at SMM will provide a unified approach towards paramedical emergency care. The SAF's National Service (NS) medics will only be trained to Paramedic Level two to meet the operational requirements. Regular SAF medics will be trained to Level three and four. Level three training will qualify the trainee as a fully fledged Paramedic and to operate independently.

THE PARAMEDIC ACADEMY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Other than the SMM training programme, there is no local expertise to establish paramedic training in Singapore. Consultancy is necessary in order to improve SAF's capability and ensure a high standard of training. Paramedic training system exist in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. The Paramedic Academy

of British Columbia, Canada was selected as they were able to meet the requirements and had the experience of exporting their system overseas.

Established in 1978, the Paramedic Academy of British Columbia based in Vancouver has two main divisions. One division is responsible for ambulance paramedic training and the other for resuscitation training for physicians and nurses. The Academy's paramedic programme is fully accredited by the Canadian Medical Association. The Academy has a regular staff of 25 and an associated faculty of 50 medical educators, paramedic instructors and physician instructors. It is supervised by a Medical Advisory Committee comprising senior physicians of all related specialties. Since 1990, the Academy has been assisting other countries improve its Emergency Medical Services and is currently working with 15 countries on three continents. The range of services offered internationally include:

- Needs and gap analysis
- Operational reviews
- Systems development, Operation and Transfer (DOT)
- Training Services
- Equipment and vehicle review

The Paramedic Academy takes pride in the training one of the world's largest and most advanced ambulance services, i.e., the British Columbia Ambulance Service. With years of experience locally and internationally, it is able to export its services tailor-made to a country's specific requirements.

Four SAF personnel were trained by the Academy as Paramedic Instructors and to the Advanced Life Support (ALS) level, which is the highest level of training for Paramedics in North America. They formed the nucleus of Paramedic Instructors in Singapore. Another four more SAF personnel are currently receiving their instructor training at the Academy.

PARAMEDIC TRAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A Paramedic Training Advisory Committee, chaired by the SAF's Chief of Medical Corps with representation from the SAF, Ministry of Health (MOH) and the SCDF was formed to oversee all aspects of training in SMM. This will ensure that only the highest of standards are maintained. At each stage of the three level programme, on-site audit by the Consultants were conducted. The consultants examine not just the deliverance of its course contents but also its evaluation and training validation system and the clinical attachment programme in the hospitals and in the Singapore Emergency Ambulance Service. In the hospital attachment programme, doctors and nurses from the hospitals were assigned as preceptors to the paramedic trainees during their attachment. A faculty of adjunct instructors, comprising

medical consultants from both the hospitals as well as private practice, was also appointed in SMM to train the paramedics. These specialists are Emergency Physician, General and Neurosurgeon, Anaesthetist, Gerontologist, Obstetrician and Psychiatrist.

PARAMEDIC ACADEMY CONSULTANT'S GAP ANALYSIS AND AUDIT REPORTS

The Consultants conducted their Gap Analysis in Feb/Mar 96. They found the SMM well poised to conduct the Paramedic programme as the training system and infrastructure is in place. As the programme developed, the Consultants conducted on-site visits and audits for the three level programme over 1996/97. The final audit for the three level programme, evaluation of the on-job-training programme both in hospitals and ambulance as well as the mentorship and training validation systems was conducted in Dec 97. Each audit saw SMM grow from strength to strength in its capabilities and standards.. In its process, SMM established its Resource Centre on Pre-Hospital Care, catering to the trainee's needs for reference materials. Full equipping for training manuals and training aids were also established.

After the final audit in Dec 1997, the Paramedic Training Curriculum in SMM has met all standards required and has being accorded full accreditation by the Academy.

CONCLUSION

The Paramedic Training Programme will enhance the SAF Medical Corps' peacetime and operational capabilities and also meet the training requirements of the SCDF and other national emergency first aid bodies. The programme has enhanced inter-ministry ties between MINDEF, MOH and MHA forging a unified approach towards paramedical care in the nation, with optimal utilisation of manpower and training resources. With this accreditation, SMM's is poise in realising its vision of becoming a regional centre of excellence for Paramedic training, the first in this region.

National Archives of Singapore

News Release:

- The School of Military Medicine Achieves International Recognition for its Paramedic Training Programme (Document No: MINDEF_19980307001.pdf)