

**Bio**

Name **Dr Onn Akbar Ali**  
 Nationality **Malaysian**  
 Company **KPJ Kajang**  
 Specialist Hospital  
 Position **Senior  
 Consultant Cardiologist,  
 Head Of Cardiac  
 Services and Consultant  
 In Charge of Emergency  
 Department**  
 Years Overseas **20**

# Sweet Homecoming

Home is where the heart is

Upon completing his undergraduate course, Dr Onn Akbar Ali commenced post-graduate training in medicine and subsequently, cardiology at various hospitals in Adelaide and Sydney in Australia. Prior to returning, he was a senior consultant interventional cardiologist at The Queen Elizabeth and Lyell McEwin hospitals in Adelaide, where he was also involved in training junior cardiology specialists, among them Malaysians. In Malaysia, Dr Onn was tasked to build and lead a comprehensive heart services clinic at KPJ Kajang, and while it was challenging – especially for someone who has never worked in the Malaysian healthcare system – the rewards were immense.

## What made you decide to come back?

Family. I left home at 12, going from one boarding school to another and then more than 20 years in Australia brought the realisation that home is home. I was concerned that my children will not be exposed to our culture and language; and of course, *rendang* and *ayam masak merah* are so much better here.

## Celebrating Aidilfitri (Eid) this month, what does it mean to you now after spending so many years abroad?

Because Eid is not a public holiday in Australia, we only get to really celebrate it on the weekend. So if it falls on a workday, it's business as usual after Eid prayers. Some of us may take leave, but others may not be able to, so we couldn't really visit each other. And you only celebrate with friends, not family. And since there weren't many other Muslims, it was a really subdued affair. Now, being able to celebrate Eid in Malaysia, I can't put my feelings into words. You get to celebrate with your whole family, and sometimes for the whole month. It is just really different.

## How did TalentCorp help you in your return?

TalentCorp came with the Director-General of Health for roadshows in various cities in Australia. I was instantly inspired to return and contribute to my home country. A representative from one of the private hospitals guided me through the process of registering and credentialing. Without their guidance and help, I would probably still be in Adelaide.

## Would you encourage other Malaysian medical specialists abroad to return to Malaysia?

Yes definitely, especially the specialists. In general, major Malaysian tertiary hospitals are very well-equipped and at times, better-equipped than those abroad. The challenge is to bring along leadership, change in working culture and etiquette to achieve better health outcomes for our people. There is also much to learn upon returning. Keep an open mind. Heart disease affects the very young in Malaysia. We are trying to make at least a tiny bit of difference.

## How can they contribute and what are the prospects for them here?

Career prospects for returning senior medical specialists are extremely good. Discuss your career aspirations with your colleagues and the management at various public and private institutions.

Employers recruiting Malaysian professionals from abroad can take advantage of the fast-track REP application. Get in touch with us at [rep@talentcorp.com.my](mailto:rep@talentcorp.com.my)

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