

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Medical training is a time-consuming process and the medical degree is one that takes the longest time to complete. To add to this, it is now increasingly recognised that no matter what training is given or how much knowledge is imparted to the medical student, it is never enough. Medical knowledge keeps on increasing at such a rapid pace and often health care providers cannot keep up with the advances of medicine quickly enough, no matter how hard they try. It is also recognised that medical education does not end with graduation and that medical education is indeed a life long process. To further complicate this process, increasing use of technology in medicine means that there is a further element to medical education, the mastery of technology. One technology that is increasingly coming to the fore is information and communication technology.

In keeping with advances in information technology there has been a dramatic increase in the use of computers among medical students in the past ten years. Many are now able to own a personal computer as it has become more and more affordable. The ways in which computers are used have also been changing. A decade ago, computer users had to be proficient in programming languages such as FORTRAN and their uses tended to be rather limited. However, with the availability of a great variety of software, such as Microsoft Office, computers are now used widely for word processing, telecommunications, information seeking and research. However, despite rapid improvements in computer literacy and utilisation, there remains a continuing need for computer-based educational experiences specific to medical

education and medical practice. Medical students, while quick to adopt computers for information seeking and word processing, have been lagging in computer applications for office management and practice enhancement. As most medical students have some basic knowledge of microcomputer applications prior to entering medical school, they might now be more receptive to new applications that would enhance their medical practice.

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

This study aims to ascertain the knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) of information technology among medical students at the University of Malaya. The differentials in the levels of KAP will be examined in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the students. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To examine the level of exposure of medical students to information technology before entering and while studying in the medical faculty.
- b) To ascertain the attitudes of University of Malaya medical students towards information technology.
- c) To study the utilisation of ICT among medical students in their study, research and telecommunication, etc.
- d) To make recommendations for the incorporation of ICT into the medical curriculum.