

(1) Title: Doctors in the Wartime Tropics: Medicine in Japanese Occupied Indonesia

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(3) Panel description

The entry of the Japanese into Indonesia in early 1942 certainly did not eliminate the need for medical facilities in Indonesia. The new rulers were faced with a largely unfamiliar local society and new medical challenges, substantially different medical practitioners, as well as constraints of wartime contingencies, but medical practice continued. However, like many subjects, medicine and public health efforts under the Japanese occupation remain veiled in silence and stereotypes. The Kurume Medical School public health mission to South Sumatra, Japanese medical and business interests in Indonesia, the intense Japanese interest in Malaria, tropical skin ulcers, and venereal disease for both Indonesian civilians and Japanese troops, the medical infrastructure in general, and even public health outreach efforts remain almost completely unknown, leaving too much to the stereotypes of Japanese callous, self-interested behavior, and passive Indonesian victimization.

Built around a core of Japan-based researchers on Indonesia in the 1940s, this panel seeks to go beyond linguistic barriers and stereotypes by exploring specific aspects of the practice of medicine in Indonesia between 1942 and 1945, revealing areas of interaction, as well as limitations on medical activity. This exploration is conceived of as a step towards comparative consideration of Indonesia and other regions during World War II, as well as a part of a more holistic picture of the Japanese occupation period in Indonesia.