

Family Medicine Research in the Asia Pacific Region: *Making History*

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The Inaugural *Workshop on Research Network Development for WONCA Asia Pacific Region* was held in Phuket, Thailand (10th – 12th July 2004), jointly organised by the General Practitioners / Family Physicians Association, Thailand, The College of Family Physicians Thailand and WONCA Asia-Pacific Region. The aim?

1. Develop family medicine research in the Asia Pacific region,
2. Provide delegates with hands-on approach to developing a research project, and
3. Encourage cross border collaborations.

A/Prof. Goh Lee Gan, WONCA Asia Pacific Region's Vice President, gave the keynote address, 'Research Roadmap, Domain & Network' (see pg 17). Practical research topics ranging from 'Formulating the Research Question' to 'Research Presentation and Writing' were enthusiastically delivered by:

Prof. Chris van Weel (Netherlands), Dr Justin Beilby (Australia), Dr Tan Ngiap Chuan (Singapore), Dr Ng Cherk Jenn (Malaysia), Dr Chusak Okascharoen (Thailand), Dr Supasit Pannarunothai (Thailand), and Dr Michael Kidd (Australia).

Delegates from Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore attended the workshop. The Singapore delegation comprised of A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, Dr Tan Ngiap Chuan, and us.

Small groups of about 6 delegates each, worked together to develop cross border research projects. The 4 projects initiated were:

- a) Would antibiotic prescribing rate in upper respiratory tract infections be reduced through academic detailing and leaflets, compared to usual care?
- b) A 5-country review of national literature on the effectiveness of smoking cessation in general practices.
- c) The use of PADAM score, and intervention with counseling and testosterone in managing andropause in men.



Delegates who attended the Wonca Asia Pacific research workshop

- d) A review of type II diabetes mellitus clinical practice guidelines.

Already the results of these 4 project proposals have been tabled for presentation at the Kyoto WONCA 2005. We were subsequently swamped by invitations from various delegates to hold the next meeting in their respective countries!

Our hosts impressed with their renowned Thai hospitality and added to our lovely experience in scenic Phuket. Some of us were 'unfortunately stranded' due to problematic return flight schedules, so (sigh!) the last day was spent with yet more intellectual exchanges with our new-found friends in the sun, sand and sea of Phi Phi Island.

And the lessons learnt? (1) The core knowledge required for carrying out research and building a research network. (2) Identifying common problems faced in our struggles to make family medicine research feasible in our respective healthcare systems. (3) Some countries have research capabilities far beyond what we have in affluent Singapore. (4) Achieving powerful results on a shoestring budget.

We were encouraged that the established research networks in Europe and Australia began with a first meeting very much like this one.

We hope to encourage our fellow Singaporean family physicians to take advantage of this interest in research. Whether we are enthusiastic beginners, disenchanted learners, cautious performers or self-reliant achievers, we all have a role to play in keeping family



Presentation by Dr Michael Yee

medicine research alive and vibrant in Singapore. Let us all work together to put Singapore on the research map. With determination and enthusiasm, we can help develop the Asia Pacific research network in family medicine!