

# Advancing Knowledge Frontiers through Medical Writing – what we learned from APAME Convention 2017

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**Asia** Pacific Association of Medical Journal Editors (APAME) 2017 convention was held over 17 to 19 August 2017 in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) for the very first time. It was jointly organised by the University of Health Science (UHS) Lao PDR and the international organising committee of APAME, in collaboration with the regional offices for the South East Asian and Western Pacific regions of World Health Organisation (WHO). The theme of the convention was on "Search and Access for Reading, Citing and Writing" which was a must-have essential skill for every medical writer and editor. College of Family Physicians Singapore sent their team of medical editors Dr Low Lian Leng (Honorary Editor) and Dr Low Sher Guan Luke (Honorary Treasurer, and Associate Editor) to the convention.

APAME was established ten years ago, and has held at least one full-fledged academic meeting annually in different parts of Asia. Since then, it has enabled many of the medical journal editors in the region to meet together, collaborate and network with each other so as to learn and share best practices. It also fostered continuing education of medical journal editors, reviewers, editorial staff, publishers and librarians who attended the convention.

Through the workshops and seminars, we learned how to raise editorial standards and promote professionalism in medical editing through education, self-governance and self-assessment. A wide range of interesting topics covered related to research, writing scientific papers, avoiding plagiarism, falsification and fabrication were taught. Even the supposedly basic stuff like finding the right title, coming up with an impactful abstract and putting in the correct keywords required a lot of art and science that could go a long way in improving the readability of the articles and increasing citations. Roles of the editorial offices

and copy editors were also shared in the group. Through the exchanges, we also learned more about some of the organisations such as WHO and its Western Pacific Region Index Medicus (WPRIM), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME) and the work that they have done in the realm of medical publications, publication ethics and publication indexing.

One lesson from the convention lecturer stuck to my head. He said, to help more people, we cannot just settle on being good doctors, but we need to embark on the quest for new knowledge through research, and share such newfound knowledge to the rest of the fraternity through publications. "A good doctor helps thousands of patients. A good researcher, writer and teacher helps thousands of doctors and millions of patients." Well said indeed!

Beyond the convention, our team took the opportunity to explore the beautiful and peaceful Capital of Lao PDR, Vientiane. Though it was a busy capital,

people were friendly and warm, and tried their best to assist us whenever possible despite the language barriers, both during and outside the convention. There were many sights that were unique to the capital, and the people took a lot of pride in preserving their culture and way of life as they knew it. It was indeed a refreshing break from the tall skyscrapers in the metropolis of Singapore, as the Lao buildings were mostly low-rise, humble-looking, rustic and charming in their own ways, exuding their characteristic architecture styles to tourists like us. The streets were safe to walk at night and had a life of its own with tutuks waiting for passengers and street food vendors selling local Lao food fare. Special mention goes to the night market by the Mekong river. In the daytime, Mekong river is a peaceful stretch of waterbody that separates Thailand from Lao,



From left to right, Dr Low Sher Guan Luke, Prof Jose Florencio Lapena (Immediate Past President, APAME), Prof Wilfred Peh (President, APAME) and Dr Low Lian Leng

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and we can see occasional fishermen harvesting their catch. But come nightfall, the Lao bank of the river transforms into a night market which sees local people setting up sprawling stalls and selling all sorts of goods including apparel, shoes, bags, electronic devices... the list goes on and so does the long queue of stalls, drawing huge crowds of local and tourist shoppers alike. It was indeed a sight to behold!

At the end of the convention, we bring home much more than just knowledge and skills, but also the friendships forged during the convention, ideas to strengthen the relevance of our Singapore Family Physician (SFP) journal, and ways to encourage our family physicians to publish more good articles through topic reviews, case reports and even research! Our team sincerely thanks the College for allowing us this opportunity to learn from our fellow medical editors in the Asia Pacific region.

CM

## 6th Asia Pacific Primary Care Research Conference

by Dr Fok Wai Yee Rose, MCFP(S), Editorial Member

**The** 6th Asia Pacific Primary Care Research Conference (APPCRC) in conjunction with Family Medicine Symposium was held at The Academia on 21 to 23 September 2017. This is the first time that the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS), SingHealth Duke-NUS Family Medicine Academic Clinical Programme and other institutions from the public and private sectors came together to organise this event. A total of 400 participants from 6 countries had attended this important event.

The theme – *Advancing Best Care through Education and Research* emphasises the importance of education and research in supporting and advancing the development of Family Medicine, and importantly, to bring about better patient care across the continuum of care.

### Remembering our history

The inaugural APPCRC was held in Malaysia in 2009 and was mooted by senior leaders in Primary Care research who came together to brainstorm for ideas to advance Primary Care research. Five countries including Taiwan, Singapore, Myanmar, Hong Kong and Malaysia came together. The inaugural conference was so successful that future conferences were swiftly put in place.

Primary care research agenda include 4 core areas – namely:

- 1) Clinical research
- 2) Health services research
- 3) Research on education and teaching
- 4) Research on methodology

### Highlights of APPCRC

This includes the much esteemed research championship workshop which provides a platform for family physicians to showcase their research ideas and develop a robust research protocol under the wise counsel of experienced family medicine researchers in the academia. Besides this key event, live competitions for best

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