


 Singapore Hypertension Society:
 

Beginnings and Purpose




Text and photo by Dr Low Lip Ping

At the 1993 meeting of the Inter-American Society of Hypertension held in San Diego, USA, Morteon Prince suggested the formation of the Pacific Rim Society of Hypertension (PRSH). This suggestion was enthusiastically adopted by representatives of Australia and Japan. Later, in 1994, at the time of the meeting of the International Society of Hypertension (ISH) in Melbourne, Australia, Prof Colin Johnston organised a symposium for potential Asian members. I was one of the Asian physicians at this meeting.

The beginning of the APSH

The first meeting of the proposed PRSH was held in Tokyo, Japan in 1995. I was invited to this meeting where I met Prof Kikuo Arakawa, one of the pioneers in the subsequent setting-up of the Asian Pacific Society of Hypertension (APSH).

The second PRSH meeting was held in Manilla, Phillipines in 1997 and was attended by over 1,000 delegates. After much discussion, it was agreed that

an organisation which would span the Pacific Rim – extending from the coast of the North and South American countries to Asia – would be impractical and difficult to maintain. It was decided that this new organisation should concentrate on the Asia-Pacific region. This was also agreed to by the ISH, to which the new organisation would be affiliated.

The APSH was officially established at that meeting in 1997. Members of this society would be the various national societies of hypertension or the hypertension sections of national cardiac societies. I submitted an application to the APSH on behalf of the Singapore Hypertension Society (SHS), which I indicated was in the process of being set up. There was in fact also an application from the Singapore Cardiac Society (SCS) to represent Singapore in the APSH, but I managed to persuade SCS to withdraw their application.

The APSH constitution then provided for an executive council of eight exec-

utive members and a secretary general (who was then Prof Trefor Morgan from Australia). Two of the executive members were to represent the founder societies of Japan and Australia, four other members were to represent the societies selected to hold the two following Asian-Pacific Congress of Hypertension (APCH) meetings, and the remaining two members were to be elected by the Council. The president of the society would be the chairman of the next APCH, and the secretariat would be located in Australia.

I was a member of the executive council at its inception and became president in 2001 when we were awarded the honour of hosting the following APCH in 2003.

Forming the SHS

The first APCH meeting was held in Bali, Indonesia in 1999 and the second meeting was held in Pattaya, Thailand in 2001. I represented Singapore on behalf of the soon-to-be-formed SHS



Receiving the flag of the Asian Pacific Society of Hypertension to host the 3rd Asia Pacific Congress of Hypertension in Singapore

and received the APSH flag at the third meeting, indicating that we would be the next APCH host.

I then gathered a group of physicians, including cardiologists, nephrologists, internists and endocrinologists, to form the SHS. We drew up a constitution based on the Registry of Societies guidelines and on the constitutions of other medical societies, including the SCS.

We also designed the logo of the SHS. The two downward arrows forming the “legs” of the letter “h” were modified to represent the desired reduction of systolic and diastolic blood pressure in hypertension. The red colour in the upper half of the arrows represents high blood pressure, while the green colour in the lower half represents low blood pressure.



The registration of the SHS was approved by the Registry of Societies, and we had an official launch of the society at the Pan Pacific Hotel on 23 February 2002. I became the first SHS president, with the late Prof Chia Boon Lock as vice-president. Dr Chee Tek Siong was the honorary secretary and Dr Akira Wu was our honorary treasurer. The initial SHS council members comprised Prof

Vernon Oh Min Sen, Dr Terrence Chua, Dr Susan Quek and Dr Wong Kok Seng.

Hosting the APCH

We set about preparing for the third APCH to be held in the second half of 2003. The venue was in Raffles City Convention Centre and if memory serves, we paid a deposit of \$50,000 to book the venue.

Then disaster struck in the form of the SARS outbreak in the first half of 2003. As a result, we had only one overseas registrant for the congress. It was obvious that we had to postpone the meeting to 2004. Fortunately, Raffles City allowed us to use the deposit for the postponed meeting.

The third APCH was eventually held in 2004 from 3 April to 7 April. It was a very successful meeting with attendance numbers beyond our expectations, and it also brought us a tidy profit.

Our living history

Over the subsequent years, SHS has continued to play an active role not only in Singapore but also in the Asia-Pacific region. Some years ago, I raised the issue of relocating the head office of APSH outside Australia with Prof Trefor Morgan, particularly as the funds of APSH – held in Australian dollars – were exposed to depreciation. I am glad to

share that the secretariat of APSH is about to be relocated to Singapore, following the good work put in by A/Prof Jimmy Teo and Clinical A/Prof Tay Jam Chin. to get the other member societies of APSH to agree to this. I also raised the issue of rotating the position of the secretary general among other APSH members and proposed other changes to the APSH constitution to improve its representation of member countries.

Our society looks set to achieve greater heights in its mission to promote knowledge about hypertension. We invite more members of the healthcare profession, including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, to become members of the society. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to see the SHS grow to what it has become today. ♦

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