



19th MASEAN Mid-Term Meeting

Text by Benjamin Ong, Editorial Executive

The 19th Medical Association of South East Asian Nations (MASEAN) Mid-Term Meeting was held from 21 to 22 July 2023 at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore. This year's meeting was hosted by the SMA and attended by delegates from the national medical associations (NMAs) of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The SMA delegation comprised:

- Adj Asst Prof Ng Chew Lip, SMA Honorary Treasurer, who is also the MASEAN Secretary General;
- Dr Ng Chee Kwan, SMA President;
- Dr Tammy Chan, SMA 2nd Vice President;
- Clinical Asst Prof Benny Loo Kai Guo, SMA Honorary Secretary;
- Dr Lee Yee Mun, SMA Council Member;
- Dr Ivan Low, SMA Council Member; and
- SMA secretariat staff Denise Tan, Spencer Soh and Krysania Tan, who also support the MASEAN Secretariat.

Scientific symposium

The theme for this year's scientific symposium was "Digital Health". This was aptly determined as the COVID-19

pandemic had served as a catalyst for the rapid digitalisation of healthcare across the region, with many countries adopting telemedicine services and mobile applications as part of their pandemic management measures. The NMAs' representatives shared their countries' progress in relation to the development and rollout of digital healthcare initiatives in their nations.

Singapore's experience was presented by Dr Lee Yee Mun. He spoke on the digital healthcare initiatives and frameworks that Singapore has launched, such as the National Electronic Health Record, the HealthHub mobile application and other regulatory guidelines for telemedicine and medical devices.

Delegates discussed some common challenges faced on this front by the NMAs, such as adoption rates for mobile applications, data privacy and security concerns. Delegates also shared their common hopes for their respective nations' digital healthcare systems to be reliable, accessible and equitable.

Next MASEAN meeting

Following the NMAs' presentations, the topic of the next scientific symposium

was discussed. It was brought up that the symposium need not always be scientific in nature and could explore topics such as healthcare financing and continuing professional development. The topic of junior doctors was also raised, and delegates engaged in preliminary discussion for a MASEAN-affiliated junior doctor network. In summary, MASEAN Secretary General Dr Ng Chew Lip acknowledged the different medical priorities each nation had and reiterated the importance of solidarity and the need for NMAs to support each other on their various agendas.

As the 19th MASEAN Mid-Term Meeting concluded, delegates were invited to the SMA Annual Dinner held at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel. We thank the delegates for joining us and we look forward to the 20th MASEAN Conference, to be held in Malaysia in 2024. ♦