

# Is there Science in Beauty?

Report on 36<sup>th</sup> SMA National Medical Convention, 14 & 15 May 2005

By Dr Wong Tien Hua, Chairman of Organising Committee

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(L-R) Dr Myint Soe, Dr T Thirumoorthy, Dr Lawrence Ng and A/Prof Goh Lee Gan answering questions after Session 1.

Dr Lee Pheng Soon, Dr Tan Siak Khim and Dr Benjamin Yim during Q&A.



Dr Ang Yong Guan Dr Chua Jun Jin

(L-R) Dr Cheong Lai Leng, Dr Cheong Wai Kwong and Dr Lawrence Khoo representing the Dermatological Society of Singapore.

(L-R) Dr Andrew Khoo, Prof Walter Tan and Dr Seah Chee Seng during Q&A on the second day, representing the Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons.

The Medical Convention is an annual event held by the SMA for our members and colleagues to update ourselves on an important health topic. This year, the chosen theme was: "‘Aesthetic Medicine’ – Is There Science in Beauty?". The event was held over the weekend of 14 and 15 May at the Ballroom of Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel. It was fully subscribed with over 300 participants.

Aesthetic medicine is certainly a hot topic now, with almost constant exposure both in the press and within our professional circles. The organising committee felt that there was a need to discuss this subject openly and objectively. The title was carefully chosen as a question and the topic was open to debate. The aim of this convention was therefore to provide a forum for discussion, and to provide knowledge and updates on what is currently available in this field.

The popularity of the topic was evident from the overwhelming response. In fact, I wish to sincerely apologise to those doctors who tried to register beforehand and were declined due to the convention being fully booked. We also had doctors who walked in and had to wait for the convention to start before being allowed registration. To them, a "thank you" for their patience and kind understanding.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

We were honoured by the presence of Professor K Satku, Director of Medical Services, who delivered the keynote address. He appealed to practitioners of aesthetic medicine to adhere to scientific based procedures, and to tread carefully where there are uncertainties. Risks must be clearly communicated and the procedure and outcome carefully monitored. He reflected on the changes in the value system of society, presenting new challenges to the medical profession.

Doctors must continue to gain the trust of patients and maintain the doctor-patient relationship. Finally, he said that the way forward for aesthetic medicine is not to have more legislation and enforcement, but for the profession to regulate itself. (Also see page 8.)

## SESSION 1: AESTHETICS – ITS PLACE IN MEDICINE

The participants were given an excellent introduction and general overview of the topic.

A/Prof Goh Lee Gan started the session by attempting to define aesthetic medicine. He found that the closest was that of the field of cosmetic surgery. He asked how aesthetic medicine/surgery fitted into the framework of conventional medicine, which is defined by its goals, a scientific- and evidence-based approach, professionalism, and providers being complementary not competitive. The scope of aesthetics was discussed, and he ended by urging providers of aesthetic medicine to abide by the principles of good medical practice. (Also see page 10.)

Dr T Thirumoorthy spoke on the professional and ethical issues in aesthetic medicine. He highlighted the differences in public demand and the medical profession's interest in aesthetics, which may result in conflicts. He discussed the subject of patient autonomy and principles of informed consent. He also discussed ethical issues of aesthetics in medicine and society, and reminded doctors not to forget the goals of medicine. (Also see front page.)

The third speaker Dr Lawrence Ng represented the Medical Protection Society, and spoke about medical indemnity in Singapore. He highlighted the categories of indemnity that a GP needs to be covered, and talked about regulation and training issues. Ultimately, the medical profession must decide for itself what procedures can be covered in the local context. (Also see page 12.)



*Aesthetic medicine is a hot topic, as evident from the full house.*



*Audience participation.*



*Participants at the exhibition booths during the breaks.*

## **SESSION 2: AGEING SKIN, UPDATES ON SKINCARE**

This started the scientific part of the convention. The speakers were nominated by either the Dermatological Society of Singapore, or the Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons.

The first speaker was Dr Ang Por and she talked about the pathophysiology of ageing skin, highlighting the mechanisms of ageing, how to evaluate the skin, and the range of therapeutic options available.

A/Prof Giam Yoke Chin then gave tips on what constitutes a sensible skincare regimen. Use of sunscreens, tretinoic acid creams, alpha-, beta- and poly-hydroxy acids, and topical anti-oxidants were discussed.

## **SESSION 3: BOTULINUM TOXIN & SOFT TISSUE AUGMENTATION**

This session started the programme on the second day.

Dr Andrew Khoo talked about the treatment of wrinkles and skin folds with the use of skin fillers. Common aesthetic applications include the ablation of nasolabial grooves, forehead lines and lip lines, as well as augmentation of the nose and chin. He showed a video presentation of the procedures done on actual patients.

Dr Seah Chee Seng gave a presentation on botulinum toxin type A, its indications and use. The common aesthetic indications for botulinum toxin are for crow's feet, glabellar frown lines and forehead wrinkles. Complications were discussed and an overview of the injection methods and sites were presented.

## **SESSION 4: DISORDERS OF PIGMENTATION & USE OF LASERS**

Dr Cheong Lai Leng spoke on pigment formation both as part of normal skin processes and in disease. She showed slides of various pigmentary lesions and emphasised on those sinister lesions that should not be missed. Different treatment approaches were presented.

Dr Lawrence Khoo gave an introduction to lasers and presented the different types of lasers and their indications for different conditions. He highlighted that the most crucial factor for the success of laser treatments depends on accurate diagnosis.

## **SESSION 5: OTHER AESTHETIC MODALITIES & THE ART OF COMBINATION THERAPY**

Dr Chua Jun Jin gave a presentation entitled "Different Artists,

Different Strokes", to emphasise his point that no two patients present with the same problems, and treatment depended on many factors. Different patients have different aesthetic desires and goals. Different aesthetic challenges require different treatment options. The various modalities that were discussed in the previous sections were brought together as a cohesive whole when he presented slides of actual patients, demonstrating combined therapy to achieve the desired results.

## **SESSION 6: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MAKEUP OF AN AESTHETIC PATIENT**

Dr Ang Yong Guan gave a lively presentation on the psychological profiles of aesthetic patients. Whilst most patients are normal, he warned of the kinds of patients that may potentially cause problems and complaints. Proper patient selection was crucial. The most commonly diagnosed psychological conditions which should make the surgeon concerned include: anxiety disorders, personality disorders, psychotic disorders, mood disorders and body dysmorphic disorders. He recommended a psychiatric review and assessment before proceeding with aesthetic procedures for these patients.

## **SESSION 7: CONCLUSIONS**

Dr Tan Siak Khim talked about some key considerations for GPs who are thinking of setting up an aesthetic practice. Issues such as the pre-requisite knowledge and skills, clinic space and design, investment in equipment, and patient population were highlighted.

The final speaker was Dr Benjamin Yim who shared with participants some of his personal experience in his aesthetic practice. The pros and cons of his work were presented. He talked about the need for training programmes and development of skills courses in the local context. (Also see page 13.)

## **APPRECIATION**

The organising committee is grateful to all the speakers for their time and participation; co-organisers Dermatological Society of Singapore and Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons for their support; and the SMA Secretariat for their hard work in making this convention a success. ■

