

Breast Surgery International at the South-East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium 24-26 Jun 2016

South East Asia comprises 11 countries, namely, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Brunei and Timor Leste. Except for Singapore and Brunei, the rest of the countries are low and middle-income countries where there is no universal health coverage. Survival from breast cancer is poor, because of diagnosis in late stages and inadequate access to optimal treatment. The South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium was co-organized by the Breast Cancer Society of Hue, the Breast Surgery International (BSI) and Global Focus on Cancer (GFC). GFC is a cancer advocacy organization based in New York whose mission is to raise awareness, provide support, and create a global network of communication for cancer patients. The chair of the symposium was Associate Professor Nguyen Dinh Tung, President of the Breast Cancer Society of Hue, and co-chaired by Dr Cheng-Har Yip, President of BSI and Carolyn Taylor, President of GFC. International speakers included Professor Gaurav Agarwal and Dr Tiina Jahkola from BSI, Dr Ophira Ginsburg from World Health Organisation (WHO), Professor Julie Gralow from the Washington School of Medicine, Dr Gabor Fischer from the University of Manitoba, and Dr Robert Warr from the United Kingdom. There were also speakers from Hong Kong and from most of the South East Asian countries, such as Singapore, Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia, as well as the host country, Vietnam. Altogether there were almost 300 delegates registered for the conference. The symposium started with a CME (Continuous Medical Education) workshop in the Hue Central Hospital on 24 Jun 2016, with lectures on various aspects of breast cancer, ranging from breast and oncoplastic breast surgery, pathology, radiology and systemic therapy. Translation from English to Vietnamese was available. The second day, 25 Jun 16 was the main conference held at the Indochine Palace Hotel, where speakers from the region talked about breast cancer in their respective countries. Some of the highlights was a symposium on breast cancer genetic mutations and their treatment, as well as a symposium on oncoplastic breast surgery. New techniques such as intraoperative radiotherapy were also discussed. The third day, 26 Jun 16 was devoted to breast supportive care, with representatives of support groups from Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar talking about the challenges faced by support groups in their countries. In addition, advocacy groups like GFC and WECAN (represented by Allison Dvaladze and Julie Gralow from the University of Washington, Fred Hutchison Cancer Centre) conducted a roundtable discussion on the concepts, barriers and facilitators and organizational structure of advocacy.

Besides the scientific sessions, the hosts organised a dinner for the faculty at Ancient Hue, where the faculty was treated to Vietnamese cuisine as well as Vietnamese music. The conference gala dinner was an open-air buffet dinner with a sumptuous display of local and international cuisine, with music and entertainment.

The next South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium will be held in Myanmar next year, and once again, BSI has been invited to be one of the co-chairs.

Dr Cheng-Har Yip
President BSI



