



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



It has been two years since this current committee is in office and in the last few months, we have been busy with preparing for our annual scientific meeting - GUT 2019 - in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. We have also been actively planning the APDW 2020 which is a little over one year away.

Together we have grown stronger in numbers and in getting recognition of our Society both locally and internationally. Throughout the years we have collaborated with various GI and liver societies, our members have participated as delegates, preceptors and faculties in regional conferences and contributed in giving opinions in matters pertaining to our fraternities. Feedbacks from our local and international academicians are positive in terms of improving the quality of abstracts and interest in learning. However, we must not rest on our laurels, we need to show our collective strength in the international platform especially APDW 2020.

I am deeply honoured to have the privilege to work with a dynamic team of people in the committee and the secretariat. We have the opportunity to introduce and tried several new ideas to enhance the Society's activities as well as other contributions to our members. From the bottom of my heart, a big thank you for all the great effort and the joy of working together.

The MSGH committee for 2017-2019 would like to thank all the members and our collaborators for the tremendous support bestowed upon us during our term.

On the 17th of August 2019 at the Annual General Meeting, a new committee will be elected. Please lend your continuous support to our new MSGH president, Professor Dr Raja Affendi Raja Ali.

Happy 25th Birthday MSGH!

Dr Tan Soek Siam

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Happy 25th Anniversary MSGH!

Welcome everyone to this year's GUT, which as our Madam President has kindly pointed out coincides with the Silver Jubilee of our beloved Society. To celebrate this occasion, the Organising Committee for this year's meeting has arranged for several special talks for us to reflect on what we have been through, where are we currently as well as our future directions as an organisation. Hopefully, we all shall be inspired to promote advancements in the GI-related fields at a personal, national or even international level. At the same time, the MSGH will be launching a commemorative coffee table book which documents the Society's 25-year journey.

In this issue of MSGH Bulletin, we have included an excerpt of an article by Emeritus Professor Dato' Dr Goh Khean Lee on the changing landscape of liver diseases in

Malaysia. Written as part of the 2017 M Balasegaram Memorial Lecture, the article touches on the evolution of liver disease patterns that are seen locally. This is followed by an article by our very own Madam President on the use of telemedicine to improve health outcomes. We have also included several reports on activities that our members or the Society have been involved in. Finally, on a more sombre note, the Society would like to extend condolences on the passing of two senior members of the Malaysian Gastroenterology fraternity.

We are in the third quarter of 2019 and hectic preparations are underway for next year's Asian Pacific Digestive Week to be hosted by us at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from 17th - 20th September 2020. Please do remember to join us again at APDW 2020 next year!

Dr Nazri Mustaffa

Excerpts from the 2017 M Balasegaram Memorial Lecture: The Changing Landscape of Liver Diseases in Malaysia - 60 Years On!

Delivered by Emeritus Professor Dato' Dr Goh Khean Lee on 5th October 2017

Professor Balasegaram Manickavasagar was a legend in his own time. Not only was he a pioneer in liver surgery, he was also a pioneer in hepatology in Malaysia. My first 'contact' with him, was when I read his paper on the treatment of liver abscess. Liver abscess was a common clinical problem at that time when I first started working as a lecturer in the University of Malaya in 1984. Diagnosis was made principally on clinical grounds and supported by findings on Technitium 99 radionuclide scanning of the liver. Ultrasonography and CT scanning were in its infancy and not widely available in clinical practice. Liver abscesses were sometimes so advanced that there would be a 'pointing' sign on the skin. Senior physicians in the ward would sometimes put in a metal trocar to drain the abscess at the bedside. Many cases were treated by open surgical drainage. Most of these cases of liver abscess were thought to be amebic in origin but its etiology was seldom proven. With increasing affluence and modernisation, amebiasis and amebic liver abscess have now declined dramatically and have become uncommon diseases in urban Malaysia.

By the mid-1980s, Professor Balasegaram had already published widely on his experience in liver abscesses. Dr Mark Ravitch, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Current Problems in Surgery*, wrote in his foreword to Professor Balasegaram's treatise on liver abscess that "Professor



Professor M Balasegaram (front row, seated 2nd from left) and his doctors with a distinguished visitor; circa 1969; courtesy of Mangai Balasegaram.

Balasegaram, as his monograph shows, has extraordinary experience with abscesses of the liver, both pyogenic and amebic. He received the Hunterian Professorial Award in 1969 as well as the Jacksonian Prize in 1971 from the Royal College of Surgeons of England. There were numerous other accolades conferred upon him".

In the 1960s, our knowledge of chronic liver diseases was centred on advanced liver cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer. Patients presented with jaundice and other overt signs of liver disease. Apart from alcohol intake, no other major etiological agents were reliably known. Liver trauma from motor vehicle accidents and other blunt injuries were increasingly seen by the surgeons in the late 1960s. Patients frequently died from these injuries, until timely surgical intervention managed to save many lives. Professor Balasegaram who was Head of Surgery at the General Hospital Kuala Lumpur, saw many such cases in the late 1960s and was at the forefront in treating these cases.

Vaccination for hepatitis B in Malaysia was given to all newborns since 1989 when it had subsequently been incorporated into the National Immunisation Programme. The introduction of hepatitis B vaccination, by reducing the huge reservoir of the infection, was a major step in the control of the disease. Hepatitis B virus infection is now established as a major cause of liver cancer globally and particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Our own studies have shown that hepatitis B infection is the major cause of cirrhosis of the liver and hepatocellular carcinoma in Malaysia.

Although a vaccine for hepatitis C has not been developed because of the existence of many quasi species of the virus, treatment of the infection had been gratifying. Immune modulating agents, alpha interferon in combination with an antiviral drug, ribavirin, were originally used for more than a decade, with modest eradication rates. In 2011, the introduction of new direct antiviral agents (DAAs) has been a true 'revolution' in the treatment of hepatitis C. The use of combination of these new drugs has been a phenomenal success with eradication rates of close to 100%. With greater affordability and widespread use of these drugs, total elimination of the virus is now, a distinct possibility. Driven by local government initiatives as well as efforts of bodies such as the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi), highly effective eradication treatment for hepatitis C will soon become available across the world. Testing and treating hepatitis C patients have entered a new phase with the introduction of 'compulsory licensing' for DAAs in Malaysia in 2018. Many patients would now be able to receive these highly effective treatments at an affordable price.

In 1980, Ludwig and colleagues described a 'new disease' and called it 'non-alcoholic steatohepatitis'. They wrote in their paper that it was 'a poorly understood and hitherto unnamed liver disease that mimics alcoholic hepatitis that also may progress on to cirrhosis. Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is the more generally used term and can now be broadly divided into benign steatosis and non-alcoholic steatohepatitis. NAFLD is predicted to become the most common liver disease globally. In the Asia-Pacific region, an epidemic of diabetes mellitus and overweight/obesity marks NAFLD as a very important disease affecting large segments of the population. NAFLD is a common disease in Malaysia affecting particularly a high proportion of Malays and Indians in the population. The natural history of NAFLD has been well described and its progression to cirrhosis and liver cancer is well documented. But without question, NAFLD will be the disease of the future. Fatty liver is a disease that is closely linked to obesity which is now formally recognised as a disease by the WHO.

In conclusion the heavy burden of chronic liver diseases due to hepatitis B and C will continue at least for the next 20-30 years. The population who were not protected by hepatitis B vaccination before 1989 will be only 60 years of age in 2050. Hepatitis C eradication treatment is being implemented now and elimination of the pool of carriers will take perhaps 10 years or more. Many patients have already carried the virus for many years and a significant proportion will develop cirrhosis and liver cancer in the years to come. Tan Sri Dr Mohd Ismail Merican, the Director-General of Health, Malaysia at that time, was instrumental in pushing the agenda for liver diseases in Malaysia in a major way. Liver surgery has become a specialised field as more cases are carried out. Surgeons have become more skilled, following on advances such as the Bala clamp, introduced almost 60 years ago. However, the ultimate treatment in liver disease - liver transplantation was slow to come on in Malaysia. In the year 2002, Dr Harjit Singh and Dr R Krishnan pioneered liver transplant in Malaysia at the Selayang Hospital. In 2015, Dr BK Yoong and his team performed the first living donor-related liver transplantation in an adult patient at the University Malaya Medical Centre.

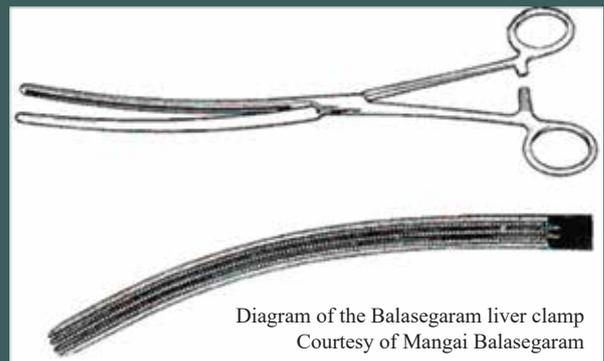


Diagram of the Balasegaram liver clamp
Courtesy of Mangai Balasegaram

What has been Happening in Telemedicine and Telementoring for Hepatology?

By Dr Tan Soek Siam

Telemedicine means “healing at a distance”; it was first conceived in the 1970’s and has been in use for some time. The four essential components in a WHO report in 2009 on telemedicine are (i) provision of clinical support (ii) connecting individuals overcoming geographical barriers (iii) utilization of various communications platforms (iv) improvement of health outcome. There are a variety of telemedicine in practice such as telemonitoring, tele-education, teleconsulting, and telecare.

Telemedicine is also a tool for the provision of education and training for healthcare professionals and providers. Telementoring by the ECHO (Extension for Community Health Care Outcomes) model refers to video teleconferencing to provide ongoing assistance from specialists (the hub) to primary care/frontline healthcare providers (the spokes) for management of cases. It also provides case-based learning to increase knowledge and reduce disparities in clinical care.

Weekly telementoring videoconference with specialists consists of short didactic lectures and case discussions. In



a prospective cohort study by S Arora et al NEJM 2011, the sustained virological response rates from hepatitis C therapy with pegylated interferon and ribavirin were similar (57.5% versus 58.2%, $p=0.89$) when comparing treatment by liver specialists to telementored primary health care providers in 21 sites in rural areas and prisons in New Mexico. Similarly, this success was

also demonstrated with the current standard of care with direct acting anti-virals and more importantly the rate of treatment initiation is higher amongst telementored primary care providers compared to those who were not (21.4% versus 2.5%) by Beste LA et al published in Am J Med 2017. More recently (by Dhiman RK et al in Journal of Hepatology 2019), a telementorship program in Punjab had enabled fast large scale-up of hepatitis C treatment by decentralizing care with generic direct acting antivirals like



sofosbuvir+ ledipasvir or sofosbuvir+daclatasvir with or without ribavirin. Over the period of 2 years from June 2016 to July 2018, a total of 48,088 people living with hepatitis C received treatment (mean age 42.1 years old, 14.8% with compensated cirrhosis and 69.9% of genotype 3). They achieved a sustained virological response of 91.6% as per protocol analysis.

Beyond hepatitis C, a study by Su GL et al published in Hepatology in 2018 showed virtual specialty consultation for patients with liver disease by SCAN-ECHO (Specialty Care Access Network-Extension of Community Healthcare Outcome) decreased the risk of death by 46% compared to the matched patients with no visits irregardless of fibrosis status. Moreover, the survival was similar between virtual and in person liver consults. The rate of screening for complications of cirrhosis i.e. hepatocellular carcinoma and variceal surveillance was found to be higher in those with virtual visit compared to those without.

Other examples are virtual multidisciplinary tumour board enabling patients to have expedited multidisciplinary evaluation without the barriers of distance or lack of specialty cares. Telemedicine had streamlined communication between transplant surgeons. Home monitoring and video-based educational programs during the peri-operative period of liver transplantation were found to improve patients’ preparedness and understanding of their postoperative care

The use of telemedicine has recently escalated which is made possible by the rapid expansion in mobile telecommunications and wireless broadband connectivity. Major advancements in technologies and medicine in a background of an aging population with rising incidence of chronic diseases demand new approach to meet our patient’s health needs. The provision of care at a distance will be an essential component in our daily clinical practice.

ENDOSCOPY 2019
Annual International Therapeutic Endoscopy Workshop
26th to 28th April 2019
Auditorium, Menara Selatan, University Malaya Medical Centre
Photos courtesy of Dr Alex Leow

This well known, long standing workshop continues to be a collaborative effort between MSGH and the GI Endoscopy Unit, University Malaya Medical Centre and is endorsed by the World Endoscopy Organization. The procedures were performed at the Endoscopy Centre on the 6th Floor of Menara Selatan and were transmitted to the auditorium on the 12th Floor. The workshop was attended by 549 participants who comprised 187 doctors and 362 allied healthcare professionals.

Several sessions were held on the 26th of April 2019:

- MSGNMA Course (whole day)
- Special Hands-on Workshop on Advanced AEG EUS Workshop - Peri-Pancreatic Fluid Collection and Biliary Drainage (morning)
- Special Hands-on Workshop on Basic Therapeutic Endoscopy (morning)
- Young Consultants and GI Fellows Workshop - The Role of Endoscopy in Inflammatory Bowel Disease



The Opening Ceremony was held on the 27th of April 2019 and was officiated by Professor Dato' Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya. Similar to last year, the Organising Committee held a 'Malaysia Boleh' session, a competition for the best endoscopic video from local experts in endoscopy which was won by Dr Nagaraj Sriram from Queen Elizabeth Hospital II, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.



The theme was "Endoscopy in Evolution". As before, a renowned faculty was assembled - Professor Dr Ang Tiing Leong (Singapore), Associate Professor Dr Hisatomo Ikehara (Japan), Professor Dr Mitsuhiro Kida (Japan), Professor Dr Helmut Neumann (Germany), Associate Professor Dr Payal Saxena (Australia), Associate Professor Dr Tomonori Yano (Japan), Professor Dr Ping-Hong Zhou (China), Ms Mary Bong (Singapore) and Ms Nanny Suzanah (Singapore). Seventeen MSGH members were moderators for the live sessions.

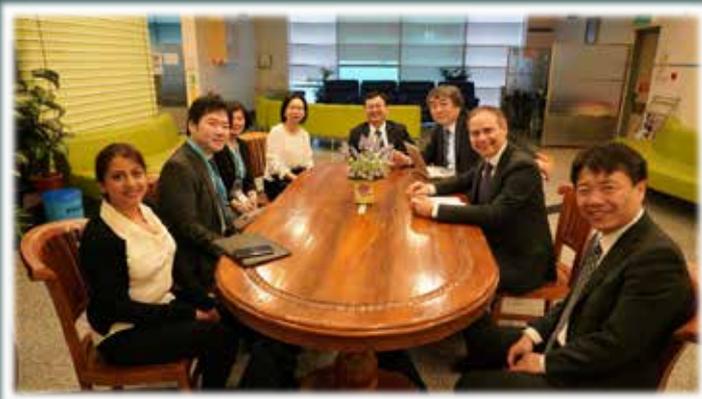
A Workshop Dinner was held on the 27th of April 2019 at Ballroom A, Level 2, Aloft Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. There were two talks focusing on Endoscopy in Evolution. Professor Dato' Dr Goh Khean Lee spoke on "The Evolution of Endoscopy: Perspective from a Malaysian sifu. Professor Mitsuhiro Kida presented on "The Evolution of Endoscopy: Perspective from a Japanese Sensei".

Professor Dr Mitsuhiro Kida delivered the MSGH and the University of Malaya Distinguished Lecture on "The Role in EUS in the Screening and Treatment of Pancreatic Cancer". Dr Alex Leow Hwong Ruey read the citation on him.

At the workshop dinner, the Society honoured GIAs who had played key roles in the Malaysian gastrointestinal endoscopy scene. They were instrumental in helping to set up and organise endoscopy units in the country

and were presented the GIA Excellent Service Award. Ms Jernih Lim, President, MSGNMA read the citations on them: Ms Mary Bong and Ms Miriam Loo Poh Khuang

(citations prepared by Sister Malaiyarsi Sellamuthu), as well as Mr Philip Gisan and Ms Rohani Ismail (citations prepared by Matron Liew Siaw Hun).



Singapore Hepatology Conference (SHC) 2019, Singapore
7th - 8th June 2019

Reported by Dr Victoria Kok

Photos courtesy of SHC 2019 Highlights Website



Dr Victoria Kok (left-most) with Professor Teerha Piratvisuth (right-most) with Malaysian delegates

From the 7th to 8th of June 2019, I had a fortunate opportunity to attend the 6th Singapore Hepatology Conference (SHC) at Suntec Singapore International Convention and International Convention Centre with 129 preceptors from 14 countries.

As a preceptee, I attended the Preceptorship Course which was held for a half day before the main event. A series of lectures, including evidence-based medicine, evaluation of the patients with liver diseases and management of patients with liver diseases, were delivered by the local hepatology experts. It was indeed a good review session!

The actual conference kick-started on 7th of June 2019 and ended on the evening of 8th of June 2019. There were two conferences running simultaneously, one for the clinicians (Singapore Hepatology Conference) which I attended mostly, and the other for researchers (The Science of HBV Cure). Day One's programme mainly focussed on a series of didactic sessions on Hepatitis B and the road in the search of a cure and the management of hepatocellular carcinoma. Day Two's programme focussed on Hepatitis C, advanced liver diseases and fatty liver disease.

The discussions conducted by the experts were truly informative. The medical experts who shared their knowledge and experiences included Tarik Asselah (France), K Chowla (India), Per-Jer Chen (Taiwan), Geoffrey Dusheiko (UK), Edward Gane (New Zealand), Jacob George (Australia), Ray Kim (USA), Teerha Piratvisuth (Thailand), R Reddy (USA), Chan Wah Keong (Malaysia) and Rosmawati Mohamed (Malaysia).

I felt that the best event during the two-day conference was the debates among the experts. Among the issues debated were whether or not to treat Chronic Hepatitis B to prevent hepatocellular carcinoma, the management of small hepatocellular carcinoma and on whether patients with NASH should be biopsied. This well-organised conference also provided useful insights from both the Western and Eastern perspectives.



I also had a fruitful session during one of the early morning workshops chaired by Robert Gish (USA), where I presented a case on Hepatitis C in an aplastic anaemia patient. The other panellists included Darrell Crawford (Australia), Rino Gani (Indonesia), and Chan Wah Keong (Malaysia). The chance to discuss my real-life case with global experts was a great learning opportunity for me.

This event is indeed a rare occasion where all the experts from around the world, internationally and locally, gather in Singapore to address the complete and up-to-date management of HBV, HCV and other liver diseases in a nutshell.

I was also able to catch up with local trainees from around Malaysia, as well as meet some of the international trainees who were ever so enthusiastic and friendly. It was great making new friends and learning from them!

Scenes from SHC 2019



JADE Immunology Summit 2019
29th June 2019

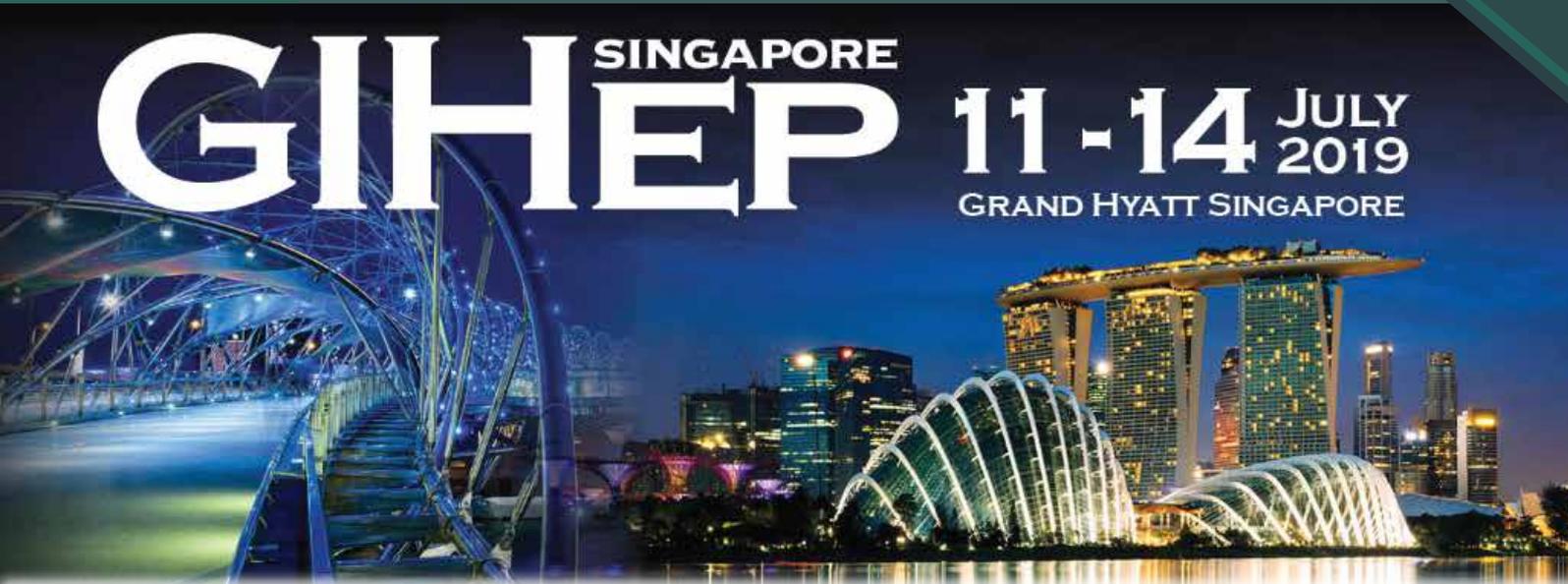
Reported by Dr Nazri Mustaffa
Photos courtesy of Janssen

The Janssen Advanced Disease Education (JADE) Immunology Summit for Malaysia was recently held on 29th of June 2019 at the One World Hotel, Petaling Jaya. Bringing together the specialties of Rheumatology, Dermatology and Gastroenterology; the meeting aimed to educate specialists from these respective fields on the pathophysiology of related immune-mediated diseases, and how current as well as emerging treatment modalities focus on modifying disease activity based on these inflammatory pathways. The meeting was well attended and provided important insights into the future treatments in these fields.



GIHEP SINGAPORE 11-14 JULY 2019

GRAND HYATT SINGAPORE



GIHep 2019 11th - 14th July 2019 Reported by Dr Tan Soek Siam



GIHep 2019 was held from the 11th to 14th of July 2019 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Singapore. The MSGH would like to thank Dr Chua Tju Siang, President of the Gastroenterological Society of Singapore, for inviting me, Professor Dr Chan Wah Kheong and Professor Dr Lee Yeong Yeh as faculty. Ten educational grants were also provided for members of the MSGH by the GIHep Organising Committee. The MSGH would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them for a very successful conference.



IBD CoE 2019
11th - 13th July 2019
Grand Hyatt, Singapore
Photos courtesy of Johnson & Johnson

The Inflammatory Bowel Disease Centre of Excellence (CoE) 2019 was organised by Johnson & Johnson Singapore in collaboration with the Gastroenterological Society of Singapore. The IBD CoE is part of a novel platform that brings together the best IBD physicians, surgeons and allied health members from the Asia-Pacific region for three days of knowledge sharing and continued professional development. Now into its third year, the IBD CoE continues to grow in leaps and bounds, with international faculty that included experts from the UK, Canada, South Korea as well as those from South-East Asia.



Congratulatory Messages



Congratulations to Dr Mak Woh Wei for her preceptorship at the Singapore Hepatology Conference (SHC) 2019 (Photo by Dr Tan Soek Siam)



Congratulations to Professor Dato Dr (Mrs) Kew Siang Tong, the recipient of COPAMM Lifetime Achievement Award (Photo via Twitter)

MSGH would like to extend its deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences to the family members and loved ones of Dr Yin Thing Phee as well as Dr Lim Kie Nyok, two of our senior Gastroenterology colleagues who had recently passed on.



The late Dr Yin Thing Phee graduated with an MBBS from the University of Malaya in 1973. He then went on to obtain his MRCP (UK) in 1980, and subsequently commenced further training in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology (UK) in 1984. In 1985, he did further specialised Gastroenterology training at McMaster University in Canada. He was then awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians (UK) in 2000. He was the Founding President of the MSGH, and practised medicine at Sunway Medical Centre before his demise.



The late Dr Lim Kie Nyok graduated with an MBBCHBAO from the National University of Ireland in 1991. He then obtained his postgraduate qualifications from the American Board of Internal Medicine (for Internal Medicine) in 1997, and for Gastroenterology in 2000. He was practising at Sunway Medical Centre before passing away.

MSGH offers its sincere condolences to their loved ones. They will be remembered.

ENDOQE 2019

31ST OCT. – 3RD NOV.

“MOULDING MASTERS IN THERAPEUTIC ENDOSCOPY”



International faculty -

- Amit Maydeo - India
- Ian Yusoff - Australia
- Benedict Devereaux - Australia
- Rungsun Rerknimitr - Thailand
- Christopher Khor - Singapore

6th Sabah International Endoscopy Workshop

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kota Kinabalu

Highlights :

- State-of-the-art lectures
- Hands-on Workshop
- Live Endoscopy
- Advanced Imaging of Colorectal Polyps
- GIA Workshop

**AP
DW
2020**

**ASIAN PACIFIC
DIGESTIVE WEEK
2020**

KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE
MALAYSIA

17 - 20 SEPTEMBER 2020

*Vision of Excellence in Digestive
Disorders & Sciences*

SAVE THE DATE

17 - 20 SEPTEMBER 2020

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