

## 13th Asian & Oceanian Epilepsy Congress SOC Chairs Report

The 13th Asian & Oceanian Epilepsy Congress (AOEC) was originally scheduled to take place in Fukuoka, Japan, from 8-11 October 2020. Due to the pandemic, it was initially postponed to 10-13 June 2021 and then ultimately the decision was taken to stage the congress virtually on the same dates. Registration fees were revised with lower fees available to everyone and those from low and middle income countries received substantially discounted rates as did scientists, AHPs, advocates, trainees and students and then there were exclusive rates for those who are ILAE or IBE chapter members.

The Scientific Organising Committee (SOC) was co-chaired by Akio Ikeda (Japan) and Ding Ding (China) and its members were Martin Brodie (Scotland), John Dunne (Australia), Shang-Yeong Kwan (Taiwan), Byung-In Lee (South Korea), Makiko Osawa (Japan), Genevieve Rayner (Australia), Parthasarthy Satishchandra (India), Graeme Shears (Australia), Daichi Sone (Japan), Samuel Wiebe (Canada) with Tatsuya Tanaka (Japan) presiding as an honorary member. Together they devised an extensive scientific programme with almost 100 sessions featuring world renowned speakers and key opinion leaders in engaging formats including many new session types such as clinical spotlight sessions, technical workshops and crosstalk sessions tackling topical issues in epilepsy and neurology. Sincere thanks to the 171 speakers who all graciously gave up their time to pre-record their presentation, and for some speakers they had multiple presentations to deliver, and also prepare for the live streaming of the sessions along with the session chairs and moderators.

The congress started with three half day ASEPA teaching courses on “Newly diagnosed epilepsy”, “Epilepsy and inflammation” and “EEG” which together were viewed by almost 400 people. The congress officially opened with the Chairmen’s Symposium on “The scope of care for the Asian Oceanian region” followed by the Seino Memorial Lecture on “Professional development”. A range of sessions followed with the paediatric session on DRE proving to be the most popular session of the day. The first day concluded with the Welcome Ceremony which included the Asian Oceanian Outstanding Achievement Epilepsy Awards (AOEA) bestowed on Xiao-Yan Liu (China), Muzharul Mannan (Bangladesh), Yoshiaki Mayanagi (Japan) and KP Vinayan (India).

Day 2 and Day 3 were busy with up to four sessions in parallel with all of the 975 registered attendees joining sessions over the course of the two days. The clinical spotlight session on “Why am I still having seizures?” attracted the highest number of delegates over the duration of the congress. The debates and ASEPA didactic lectures also were particularly well received. On the final day, the session with the highest amount of attendees was on “Clinical features and semiology of different seizure types” and also the surgery main and post main session on treatment gap and latest trends also proved popular. IBE’s Epilepsy & Society Symposium aimed at people living with epilepsy and their care givers covering prevalent social issues also took place on the Sunday and additionally JES offered sessions in Japanese for JES members. Content is available on demand for a further two months for all registered delegates.

332 abstracts highlighting the latest research in the region were submitted for the congress with 38 selected for oral presentation and the rest were displayed in the interactive poster gallery alongside industry scientific exhibits. Fitri Octaviana (Indonesia) and Taketoshi Maehara (Japan) were tremendous in their roles as the Abstract Review Committee co-chairs and ably assisted by members of ILAE-AO, ASEPA and JES who kindly reviewed the abstracts. The Tadokoro Prize, introduced at the 5<sup>th</sup> AOEC in Bangkok in 2004 acknowledging Dr Y. Tadokoro from Japan who contributed generously to the early years budget of the regional Commission, recognizes the best oral and poster presentations in both clinical and basic science and was awarded to Kozue Hayashi (Japan), Hyun Yong Koh (South Korea), Kavita Srivastava (India) and Lei Wi (China). A number of poster tours were carried out virtually with great success and thanks to the experts for leading the tours and to the presenters for showcasing their work. All researchers that applied for a bursary when submitting their paper were successful in their application and in addition, ILAE-AO also offered extra

complimentary registrations to trainees and students to the low and middle income chapters in the region. The ILAE-AO Mentor Mentee Programme organised by the ILAE-AO Research Task Force continues to support trainees in the region.

ILAE-AO were able to hold both the Chapter Convention and also the joint business meeting of ILAE-AO and ASEPA virtually in the lead-up to the congress. Minutes for both of these meetings are available separately. ILAE-YES AO also met virtually as did several of ILAE-AO's Taskforces.

A dynamic virtual platform was created for the congress to replicate the face-to-face experience. Despite some initial technical issues, the response to the platform was overwhelmingly positive, particularly from the younger generation, who often find it difficult to join the congresses due to financial limitations or taking time off work. A Networking Lounge featured Network Tables with two evenings of roundtable discussions on topical issues hosted by KOLs; the feedback on these and other networking initiatives such as business matching, the chat function and the photo booth has been excellent. The platform also boasted a Global Village, Resource Centre, Art Exhibition, Gamification and a Pharmaceutical Exhibition.

We are grateful to our platinum sponsor Eisai, our gold sponsor UCB, our silver sponsor BioMarin, our bronze sponsor GW Pharma and our other sponsors for their support of the 13<sup>th</sup> AOEC. We hope for their continued support to enable us successfully deliver high quality congresses that improve education and training in the field of the epilepsies in Asia and Oceania, especially in these uncertain times.

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