

Asian Regional Cooperative Council for Nuclear Medicine: A Model of Regional Cooperation

Asia is the largest continent in the world, with more than 60% of the world population. The promotion of nuclear medicine in Asia is important for all of us. However, the unfortunate reality is that the current status of nuclear medicine in Asia falls far below the necessary standard. In fact, the number of institutes in most developing Asian countries has virtually remained unchanged during the last decade, due not only to low economic status but also to lack of awareness about nuclear medicine and a shortage of experts in that field. When nuclear medicine activity is compared between Asian nations and Eastern European nations of similar economic standing, the Asian nations have far fewer facilities and workers. Therefore, efforts to increase awareness of and to properly educate on nuclear medicine are pivotal to the successful promotion and development of nuclear medicine in many Asian countries.

The Asian Regional Cooperative Council for Nuclear Medicine (ARCCNM) was initiated by Korea, Japan, and China and was officially founded in February 2001. The council began with 13 member states but later grew to include 18. Its main objectives are to establish liaisons with the official national bodies of nuclear medicine and to enhance regional scientific activities by way of conferences, seminars, and educational programs, by which communication between experts, trainees, and fellows in the field may be facilitated. The executive board was installed as the governing body of the ARCCNM. Dr. Myung-Chul Lee (Korea) was elected as the first chairperson of the ARCCNM, and Drs. M.A. Ka-



rim (Bangladesh), Johan S. Masjhur (Indonesia), and Yutaka Suzuki (Japan) were selected as co-vice chairs of each of the regional chapters: Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Far East Asia, respectively. The first annual meeting was held in Dalian, China, June 1–3, 2002, with approximately 60 participants. The second annual meeting was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, February 6–8, 2003, with 300 participants, including 100 from abroad. The third annual meeting was merged with the congress of the Asia and Oceania Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology and was held October 8–11, 2004, in Beijing, China. The annual meeting has been held in conjunction with academic meetings of national nuclear medicine societies in developing countries to enhance awareness of nuclear medicine in those regions. In February 2003, Dr. June-Key Chung (Korea) was elected as the second chairperson of the ARCCNM. Ten young, active representatives from main member states were nominated as members of the organizing committee.

As it became increasingly clear that more practical action was required of the

ARCCNM, foundations were laid for the construction of an Asian School of Nuclear Medicine (ASNM). In 2003, the ASNM became a reality, with Dr. Felix X. Sundram (Singapore) as the elected dean. Most Asian countries lack organized educational programs in nuclear medicine. The ASNM aims to advocate innovative scientific and technical knowledge, such as PET and cyclotron technology, to developing and less developed nations and subsequently to increase the number of young physicians and scientists specialized in nuclear medicine. The ASNM has already established a regular education course on PET and cyclotron technology with the cooperation of the Korean government.

The success of promoting nuclear medicine is cradled by several determining factors including proactive national societies, strong government support, vision and accountability from powerful leaders, and cooperative activity from regional and international organizations. ARCCNM has been successful in harnessing Asian regional support. Such ARCCNM activities have been possible through the aid of contributions by several global companies. Asia is a region aspiring to flourish in nuclear medicine practice and scientific activity and holds great potential for growth in this field. The ARCCNM will be an ideal benchmark for the extension of similar projects into other areas in the world. Please visit <http://www.arccnm.org> and give us your support and advice.

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