
MEETING REPORT

UICC Asian Womens' Cancer Network Workshop

On the 7th and 8th of September, a workshop was held at the Hotel Istana in Kuala Lumpur under the auspices of the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) to discuss prevention measures for breast and cervical cancer, the two most prevalent cancers in Asian women, with particular attention to screening methodologies.

The need for the workshop was evident from the UICC 1st Asia Pacific Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference held in Kuala-Lumpur in August 2002, which had 2 major outcomes. One was formation of the Asian Women's Cancer Network, headed by Ms Ranjit Kaur, to advocate to Governments across the region the improvement of prevention and screening of women's cancers. The second was the award of 2nd Asian Pacific RRI Breast Cancer Support Conference to the Singapore Cancer Society.

The main aim of the workshop was to develop strategies for screening for breast and cervical cancer for developing countries which the Asian Women's Cancer Network can advocate and which can be implemented in both rural and urban areas in a step wise fashion so that women who screen positive are followed up and their early cancers treated competently. Optimally, they should be affordable and based on female health workers as the screeners.

A further goal was to explore approaches to primary prevention of women's cancers and education about women's cancers which would be useable in Asian-Pacific Countries with their diverse cultures, social rules and customs and governments and non-government cancer organizations. A representative of the Asian Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention (APOCP) was also invited to allow exploration of ways in which the two



Participants at the Workshop

organizations might work together on cancer prevention in the Asia Pacific region.

The workshop commenced with a Working Dinner at which Dr Robert Burton, UICC Strategic Leader for Building and Enhancing Capacity, provided an introduction of the aims and program. Representatives of Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Singapore, Japan and Australia then each spoke for a few minutes about the prevention and early detection of women's cancers in their countries to provide a basis for discussion. The meeting proper commenced the next morning with Dr Burton in the chair.

Dr Yip Cheng Har of the University of Malaya first provided an overview of the methodologies available for breast cancer screening, comparing the merits of mammography versus breast self examination and breast clinical examination by a trained health care worker. Debate was very lively with ample opportunity for input from all the participants. This was followed by a talk by Dr Arun Kurkure, of Mumbai India, on Indian rural cancer screening projects with an additional short presentation by Dr Latifa Shamsuddin of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

A contribution by Dr Helene Sancho-Garnier, UICC Strategic Leader for Population-based Prevention and Cancer Control, on Cervical Screening Projects in developing countries and the merits of Visual Inspection Acetic acid (VIA) versus Pap smears had then been scheduled but unfortunately she could not attend. Instead, Dr Arun Kurkure provided a summary of results with VIA from a number of investigations conducted in India.

Dr Malcolm Moore of the Asian-Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention (APOCP) was also provided with an opportunity to give an overview of its history and the publication of its journal, the APJCP. He also was able to outline proposals for Asia-wide collaboration for research into important aspects of mammary and cervical cancer development.

In the final talk of the day, Mrs Ranjit Kaur of the Asian Women's Cancer Network and the UICC Reach to Recovery Breast Cancer Support Network gave a succinct coverage of its aims and activities. This was followed by a summary of discussions and recommendations which might be made with Ms Kaur in the Chair. Dr Burton then provided a synopsis of the report he would be making to UICC Head Office in Geneva.

After the end of the meeting, Malcolm Moore as a representative of the APOCP and Robert Burton and Arun Kurkure as representatives of the UICC had a short discussion as to possible further interaction between the organizations and it was decided that contact should be maintained by email. For his part, Malcolm Moore promised to report back to Dr Kazuo Tajima, Chairman of the APOCP, and Dr Tomoyuki Kitagawa, Chairman of the Japanese

UICC Committee. There is no doubt that the UICC and the APOCP have aims in common. The question now is how they can best be achieved and how fruitful interaction can be furthered in the future (see Moore, Appearance and Disappearance of the UICC Logo from the Cover of the APJCP - Apologies and Explanation, in the present issue of the journal).

Malcolm A Moore

Acknowledgement

The attendance of Malcolm Moore at the Workshop was financed by the UICC, covering the travel expenses and accommodation. As a representative of the APOCP he would like to take this opportunity to express his gratitude for the support provided, as well as the opportunity to meet the participants and learn from their expertise.