

**SPECIAL REPORT**

**THE 14<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN FEDERATION OF PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH (AFPMH) CONGRESS MEETING IN CEBU, THE PHILIPPINES**

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It is a great pleasure for the editorial board of ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry to report this important and meaningful event which took place in Radisson Blu, Cebu, Philippines from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014. This was the 14<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Federation of Psychiatry and Mental Health (AFPMH) Congress which was successfully hosted by the Philippines Psychiatric Association (PPA). Through this biennial congress, the Federation aims to build a good collaboration between the participating countries by exchanging information and knowledge and to disseminate new development in research and therapy in psychiatry and mental health. In keeping with the theme of “Setting gold-standard of care in ASEAN psychiatry”, the congress has provided a platform for a mixture of information exchange coming from the member and other countries.

The congress was preceded by a two-day AFPMH Leadership and Training Program for Early Career Psychiatrists on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014. This was successfully facilitated by Prof. Dr. Norman Sartorius, Prof. Dr. Mohan Isaac, Prof. Dr. Erminia Colucci and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dinah Nadera and enjoyed 19 budding psychiatrists from member countries as well as from Papua New Guinea, Pakistan and Australia. Leadership program like this is an important mechanism in bringing further development in mental health and psychiatry in the ASEAN countries.

The congress was attended by renowned international plenary speakers from Australia and Canada to highlight advances in pharmacotherapy and current biological interventions. These informative sessions were interspersed with presentations by psychiatrists from member countries sharing

different levels and areas of research and service development. Among the topics shared were common psychiatric disorders, late-life depression and dementia, suicide, insomnia, alcohol treatment, nomenclature of psychiatric medications, mindfulness, sexual dysfunction, ethics in psychiatry and mental health care in the community. It is timely for the ASEAN psychiatrists to integrate novel evidence-based approaches to facilitate recovery among those suffering from mental disorders in the region while blending it with unique approaches relevant in the vast cultural diversity.

The AFPMH Congress has traditionally been a collective platform to disseminate key-points updates on mental health issues and service development from member countries. This time, six countries participated in sharing country reports delivered by the president or representative of psychiatric association from each country: Dr. Edgardo Juan L. Tolentino, Professor Dr. Marhani Midin, Dr Yongyud Wongpiromsarn, Dr. Danardi Sosrosumihardjo, Dr Cheng Lee and Dr. Kim Savuon from the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Cambodia respectively. The main highlight from each country was the continuing growth in mental health and psychiatric services. Consistent with the recommendation by the World Health Association, each country reported an increase in number and level of services provided in the primary care setting which is more accessible to the population. Common challenges shared by each country include inadequate financial and human resources for mental health development, stigma and discrimination, problems in the service system and lack of mental health information system.

This biennial meeting is also the avenue for

the federation to hold its regular meeting and hand over its presidency to the next host country. A new President of AFPMH was elected from Indonesia in replacement of the past-President from the Philippines, Dr. Pureza Trinidad Oñate. Dr. Danardi Sosrosumihardjo from Department of Psychiatry, University of Indonesia (UI) Medical School, Jakarta, Indonesia will bear the duties as President of the ASEAN Federation of Psychiatry and Mental Health from 2015 to 2016. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Danardi Sosrosumihardjo thanked Dr. Pureza Trinidad Oñate and the Philippines Psychiatric Association for hosting the federation for the past 2 years. Dr. Danardi Sosrosumihardjo stressed the importance of working together

and promoting a gold-standard of care in the management of patients from the ASEAN region and announced Semarang, Indonesia as the venue for next AFPMH congress planned in August 2016.

It is felt that participants have enjoyed the warm hospitality displayed by the organizing committee of the 14<sup>th</sup> AFPMH Congress, the kindness of the people of the Philippines and the beautiful places in the Cebu Island. It is hoped that this congress had fulfilled its aims in highlighting recent management updates and sharing unique experiences which are key steps in improving the mental health of the multi-ethnic and multicultural societies across the South East Asia region.