

Post conference report: Joint Conference (AMSA & IFMSA) 2011

Held in Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

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Abstract

The inaugural Joint Conference of the Asian Medical Students Association and the International Federation of Medical Students Associations was held in Hong Kong from the 25th of June to the 2nd of July, 2011. The Conference was attended by 550 delegates from 32 countries, and its aim was to explore the theme of *Integrative Medicine: Evidence-based, traditional, complementary and alternative medicine in modern medical practice*.

Introduction

The inaugural Joint Conference of the Asian Medical Students Association and the International Federation of Medical Students Associations was a huge success. Held in Hong Kong from the 25th of June to the 2nd of July, the Joint Conference 2011 was attended by a large delegation of 30 Australian medical students who were interested in the conference's theme – Integrative Medicine: Evidence-based, traditional, complementary and alternative medicine in modern medical practice.

AMSA Hong Kong's team of organisers created an amazingly diverse program that combined the strengths of the Asian Medical Students Conference with those of the Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of the IFMSA. The academic and social programs allowed the 550 delegates from 32 countries to explore the conference theme from a variety of angles, while celebrating one another's cultures and learning new skills in workshops and training sessions.

Academic Program

Lectures

There were two highly informative and thought provoking keynote lectures presented during the conference. These lectures addressed the theme of Integrative Medicine. The first lecture was presented by Professor Jin Ling Tang who explored the efficacy-driven approach to research in integrative medicine as well as the challenges to overcome with research in this field. The second lecture was delivered by Dr Vivian Wong, JP, who focused her lecture on the developments of integrative medicine in Hong Kong and around the world, focusing on public perception, uptake and professional training.

There was a lecture series and interactive workshop presented to us by officials from the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNMDG). The lectures educated us on the UNMDGs and the current progress across the world, as

well as what we could do as upcoming health professionals to contribute to their success. The interactive workshop presented two cases through which all of the delegates applied the basic principles of the UNMDGs to be able to understand their importance. Throughout the workshop, the Australian delegates gave significant input in identifying key issues and formulating solutions for them.

In addition, we also had Dr Craig Hasted from Monash University attend and discuss the ESSENCE of health, a model which promotes lifestyle changes by providing evidence to support the change, as well as assisting the patient in developing a holistic understanding of their health in the context of their current health. He also discussed mindfulness for medical students as a stress management technique which culminated in a practical session to demonstrate the effectiveness of mindfulness.

Standing Committee Sessions

All of the delegates in the conference were split into five groups and each group attended one of the Standing Committee (SC) sessions, which were small group discussions. Attendees were introduced to the goals of the particular SC, facilitated to discuss how we could address such goals while collaborating with delegates from various countries and finally learning the method of creating successful projects. The standing committee sessions included Medical Education, Public Health, Research and Professional Exchange, Human Rights and Peace, and finally, Reproductive Health including AIDS.

AMSA International Booth/IFMSA Project Presentation

This activity allowed delegates from each country to learn about and understand the projects being conducted by medical students in their countries while learning about their culture.

Training workshop

Delegates attended a variety of training workshops designed to develop skills

which would help with the implementation of projects formed in Standing Committee sessions and in their future career. The workshops, led by IFMSA trainers, addressed topics such as leadership development, communication skills, presentation skills, handover, negotiation, project management, time management, peer education and conflict resolution.

Academic Competitions

Each country submitted presentations for the academic paper, poster and video competitions. They were all designed to address aspects of traditional, alternative and complementary medicine in their respective nations.

Community Service

The theme for the community service program was “Fall Prevention” targeting the elderly population. As part of the program, delegates were split into two groups with one group carrying out a home visit while the other participated in a training workshop. As part of the home visit, delegates were invited to the homes of elders, the majority of whom were living alone. A detailed home assessment was carried out to assess fall and trip hazards. Delegates were then able to interact with their elder via a translator and social worker from the Salvation Army, who taught them simple exercises to strengthen their muscles and educating them on fall prevention. The training workshop was carried out in the community hall with elders and delegates participating in a variety of presentations, games and activities, all with the aim of increasing awareness of the importance of fall prevention. Through these two programs, delegates were able to not only gain a better understanding of Hong Kong culture and other social aspects through direct interaction with Hong Kong locals, but they were also able to help the elderly through simple activities.

Site Visit

An afternoon was dedicated to visiting various sites including the Hong Kong University Chinese Medicine Faculty and

clinic, chiropractic, acupuncture and moxibustion workshop, in relation to the theme of traditional, complementary and alternative medicine. This gave delegates an opportunity to see and personally experience some of the traditional therapies that they had been introduced to over the week in lectures and workshops, in order to gain a better understanding of how they work. Brief introductions and demonstrations of the various therapies were given and discussions on how they are currently integrated into the conventional health system were also conducted.

Cultural Program

Throughout the Joint Conference, delegates were exposed to different aspects of Chinese culture. The conference was officially opened with a traditional lion dance performance which earned a thunderous applause of the entire audience. On Day 5 of the conference, a Dinner and International Food and Drink party was held, where each participating chapter was required to bring food and drinks unique to their own country. Through this delegates were given the opportunity to sample food from other countries’ stalls, adding to the experience of sharing cultures of not only Hong Kong, but also from all around the world.

On the final day of the conference, the Organising Committee arranged a cultural bazaar, in which delegates participated in small workshops that were aimed to share the culture of Hong Kong. These workshops included traditional knot-tying, paper cutting, calligraphy, traditional Chinese games and lessons in cooking Cantonese food, as well as a small workshop on basic kung-fu techniques.

The Cultural Night was planned for the last day of the conference, where each country participating in the conference went on stage with a cultural themed performance, such as traditional dancing and singing.

Social events

On day one of the conference all of the 500 delegates were divided into 30 groups,

each of which was led by two or three group moderators (GMs) from AMSA Hong Kong. From there, the social program began in earnest with ice breaking in our respective groups, followed by a welcoming dinner at the famous Star Seafood Floating Restaurant.

Over the next few days our groups were to become something akin to family, with social activities largely being centred around the wishes of each group's members. Our GMs worked hard, into the early hours of the morning planning our activities, amidst arranging other things.

With regards to sightseeing and shopping, Hong Kong certainly did not disappoint; indeed many a lecture was missed as students were lured away by the prospect of Disneyland or making that essential purchase of "cheap 'n' fake" goods at the Mong Kok markets. Amongst the highlights of our sightseeing excursions

were: taking a tram to "the Peak" to see Hong Kong's night lights in all their glory; and viewing the magnificent city skyline from Victoria Harbour.

From a social perspective, the Joint Conference was a fantastic experience to delight even the most seasoned socialite, and one that will be remembered for many years to come.

Conclusion

All good things must come to an end and it was without a doubt an invaluable experience attending the inaugural Joint Conference of the Asian Medical Students Association and the International Federation of Medical Students Associations. A new culture was explored, more insight was gained into the field of integrated medicine and friendships were forged with memories that will last us a lifetime.

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Conflicts of Interest

None declared



