



REMEMBERING PROFESSOR DATO' KHEAN-LEE GOH (1956 – 2023)

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Week (APDW) is now a very important international conference in Asia and in the world, its birthing pains were indeed the exact opposite to its gentle success today. The dissonance of the differing visions and strategies of growth for a number of academic gastroenterology, digestive endoscopy, hepatology and surgery organisations, was as loud and colorful as the bang of the coming of the new Millennium. The creation of the Asia Pacific Digestive Week Foundation (APDWF) amalgamated these organisations' similar, yet sometimes, parallel philosophies. To establish a unified platform for the annual Asia Pacific academic meetings on the disorders of the gastrointestinal tract and the liver, was the overarching dream of the APDWF.

In 2010, Malaysia hosted a very successful Asia Pacific Digestive Week with Professor Khean-Lee Goh as the Congress President. In the same year, he assumed the Presidency of the APAGE and, thus, added more vigor and vision to the core of the APDWF. As the APAGE President, he fostered wider cooperation and synchronisation of the regional scientific meetings in gastroenterology. At the same time, he relentlessly pursued to teach and train young colleagues within Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries on advanced endoscopic techniques.

If the Asia Pacific Digestive

Through his efforts, the Universiti Malaya Medical Centre Endoscopy Unit was recognised as a World Endoscopy Organization Center of Excellence in 2008, until now.

Professor Goh's ascension to the Presidency of the APDWF was a natural fit to the earlier efforts of his predecessor, Professor Kwong-Ming Fock, in galvanising the alliance to ensure the progress and growth of the afore-mentioned disciplines in the Asia Pacific region. Professor Goh served two terms as the President of the APDWF, namely; in 2014 to 2016 and in 2016 to 2018. Overall, he efficiently oversaw the successful organisation of four APDW Congresses held in Taipei in 2015, Kobe in 2016, Hong Kong in 2017 and Seoul in 2018. These annual international academic meetings drew a total of 12,300 participants from many Asia Pacific countries, including delegates and faculty from Europe and North America.

During his two terms of two years each, the APDWF allocated considerable funding for more travel grants to clinicians and scientists in the early stages of their careers to attend the APDW Congresses, present their scientific research, establish and/or expand their international network with like-minded investigators,

broaden their education and enrich their experiences in gastroenterology, endoscopy and hepatology. From 2012 to 2016, he also served as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Foundation



Happy times with KL Goh and esteemed fellow colleagues



(JGHF). In partnership with the JGHF, he nurtured further the recognition of those young investigators who already were making groundbreaking research on many diseases common in the Asia Pacific region, i.e., the APDWF-JGHF Emerging Leader Award. Being the global leader that he himself had become, he was honoured to deliver the Distinguished Global Lecture of the World Gastroenterology Organization at the APDW 2015 in Taipei.

In 2017, Professor Goh was chosen as the JGHF-APDWF Marshall & Warren Lecturer in recognition of his investigational strides on the epidemiology of *Helicobacter pylori* in his multiracial country of Malaysia. During his career, he was a co-convenor and faculty of many Asia Pacific Clinical Practice Guidelines on many GI disorders common among us. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic and well into his illness, he was still in the forefront of tackling the many concerns of GI disorders in this part of the world. In 2021, he led the development of the consensus guidelines on the diagnosis and management of mild-to-moderate gastroesophageal reflux disease in the Southeast Asian region.

What an opportune happenstance that Professor Khean-Lee Goh's nickname among colleagues and friends was "KL"... and he worked and published out of KL, the abbreviated monicker for Kuala Lumpur! As we were almost of the same age, I used to tease him about the stroke of serendipity of being "the KL from KL"! If it were easy to remember a person through his many affiliations, this one is a master stroke.

In addition to his academic work and publications, KL was a breath of fresh air in the gastroenterology leadership in the region. His mild and unthreatening demeanor made him the charismatic yet transformational figure that colleagues and students hold dear. Most importantly, the breadth of his influence has created multinational scientific collaboration, forward-looking alliances, and enduring international friendships. Thus, he became the perfect ambassador to establish bridges between and among the multiple interest groups in the Asia Pacific – an apt and savvy consensus-builder.

APAGE IBD Consensus Meeting in Penang, Malaysia 2017

