International Atomic Energy Agency in Myanmar 2015 – The melting pot of ideas for Asian hybrid imaging specialists

The regional training course on the role of hybrid imaging technologies in nuclear oncology - basic concepts and applications, RAS-6079 project was held in Yangon, Myanmar in September 2015. This was an International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA sponsored training for specialists working in diagnostic imaging field involving ionizing radiation in Asia. A total of 15 countries throughout Asia and 21 participants took part in this training. The selected group of participants included radiologists, nuclear medicine physicians, oncologists, and medical physicists. I was honoured to be selected as a representative for Malaysia at this international training. Among others, there were updates on the usage of PET/CT in staging of head and neck, brain, colon and gynaecological tumours. There were also lectures on multi-parametric MRI for the assessment of prostate cancer. IAEA trainer Dr.Ravi Kashyap, a nuclear medicine specialist and radiologist by training, advocated the peaceful use of radiation for the diagnosis and staging of cancer and treatment planning. He shared with us a free mobile application by IAEA for TNM staging of cancers and recommended that all centres carry out regular multidisciplinary, MDT meeting for better personalized oncology management and treatment. The other IAEA trainer was Prof Dr J Antonio Obando.

The hosts in Myanmar, namely Dr. Win Mar, Professor and Head of Department of Nuclear Medicine, Yangon General Hospital and his team were very hospitable. Apart from the professional networking platform provided by this training, there were many opportunities to sample the culture and heritage of Myanmar. We had a group tour to the National Golden Pagoda Temple, Shwedagon Pagoda which is almost 100 metres tall and contains many national relics and gemstones such as rubies, amethysts, emeralds and diamonds. The hosts also treated us to a sumptuous buffet dinner at the Karaweik Royal Barge restaurant which is like a floating palace in the shape of a huge barge, floating on Kandawgyi Lake
in Yangon. We had the opportunity to sample Myanmar delicacies and be entertained by a local dance group that performed traditional Myanmar live stage shows.

Overall, the group of participants felt comradely towards one another and shared experiences in our filed of work involving hybrid imaging. This training provided us with a platform to share experiences and understand the advantages and benefits of joint MDT meetings and discussions, and not just limit ourselves to bilateral case discussions; for the optimum benefit to the patients to provide personalized medicine using the advances in hybrid imaging. We look forward to future joint regional trainings and applaud IAEA for their effort in promoting the peaceful usage of atomic energy for the benefit of mankind across the globe.

Photo (clockwise from the left): Course participants on a tour at the monumental Shwedagon, Golden Pagoda temple; Dr Ravi Kashyap and Prof Dr J Antonio Obando (IAEA trainers) with the gentlemen trainees; Dr. Subapriya Suppiah at the Karaweik Royal Barge restaurant; local Myanmar desserts delicacies served at the Karaweik Restaurant; ladies who participated in the training at Summit Parkview Hotel, Yangon; Karaweik Barge and Lake at sunset; popular tea leaves salad ‘laphet thoke’ served during the training session by our gracious hosts; all the participants of the regional training course on the role of hybrid imaging technologies in nuclear oncology, comprising of specialists from all over Asia (centre pic).