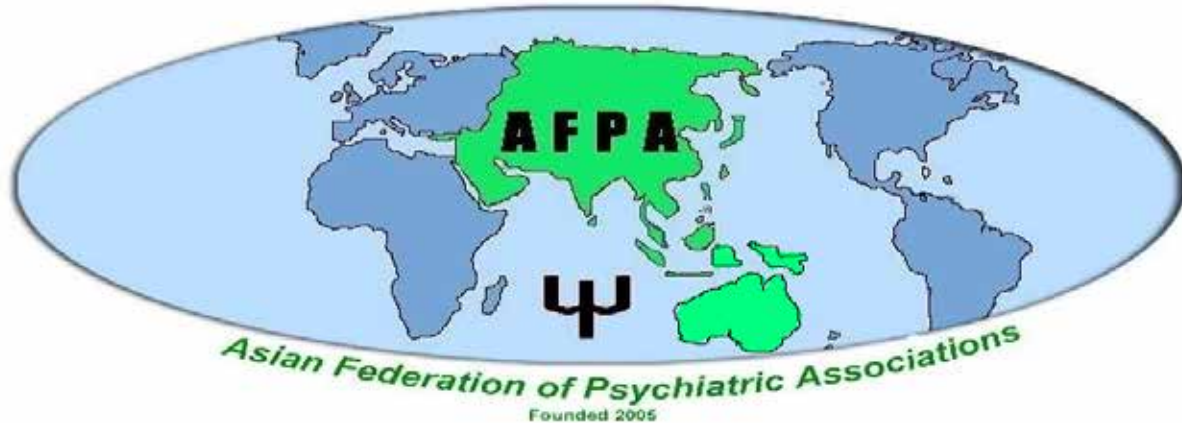


The Bulletin of the AFPA

The Winter 2023 Issue



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AFPA President's Messages



My dear esteemed colleagues! It is a great honour to write this address as your president. First, let me express thank you all for supporting me for the leadership of Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations (AFPA) for electing me as your president. Your faith in my leadership give me energy to work. Collectively all the leadership areas AFPA will improve mental health across our Asia - Pacific region with commitment to world psychiatry.

I am grateful to Shigenobu Kanba, Afzal Javed for the ever strong commitment and vision in building

AFPA. For their leadership in building this organisation, for their exceptional hard work in strengthening and sustaining vision to maintain Asian solidarity and improving the AFPA, maintaining standards. I am aware that their leadership has been guiding not only AFPA but also world psychiatry, my respectful salutation to them.

Naokata Shinfuku, Pichet Udomratn and Malcolm Hopwood further played vital rôle along with Winton W. Shen, in further developing the vision, sustaining the philosophy of AFPA. All past AFPA presidents along with Normal Sartorius and Mohan Isaac are giving the thrust to maintain the growth of positive mental health across the region – Asia Pacific. I should also acknowledge the sustaining growth, I humbly acknowledge the successive AFPA's executive committee council members and the honorary fellows continuously provided and guided with their wisdom and serious directions.

Winston W. Shen needs to be complimented for his untiring energy to regularly bringing *the Bulletin of AFPA* periodically and scholarly. It is also my privilege to work under Afzal Javed, Malcolm Hopwood during the last six years in council and for their mentorship.

My ambitions and visions for AFPA, 2022-2024

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Publisher: G. Prasad Rao*

*Corresponding address: Schizophrenia and Psychopharmacology Division, Asha Hospital, 298, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad - 500034, India
E-mail: G. Prasad Rao <prasad40@gmail.com>

Editor: Winston W. Shen**

**Corresponding address: Taipei Medical University- Wan Fang Medical Center, 111, Section 3, Hsing Long Road, Taipei 116, Taiwan
E-mail: Winston W. Shen <Shenwinw@gmail.com>

The Asian Federation of Psychiatric

Associations® (AFPA®) was registered in Tokyo, Japan on 12 December, 2016.

I am looking forward for continuous engagement of AFPA, federation leadership across the countries and to primarily to particularly develop psychiatric knowledge, skills imparting, to help harmonise across countries of sharing the best psychiatric practices to impart knowledge sharing through our website and be in regular touch by interactive webinar learnings.

Among the counties to maintain solidarity and exchange of psychiatric education first in medical under graduate education and post graduate education, residency programme. I request all associations to write to me the faculty who wish to participate in this programme through e-learning to mentor young psychiatrists. I wish to recognise Rajiv Tandon's contributions to AFPA, as chief editor of Asian Journal of Psychiatry, as training the young scholars, psychiatrists in the past two world congresses, both at Sydney and Hyderabad.

My ambitions and visions for AFPA, 2022-2024

I am looking forward for continuous engagement of AFPA, federation leadership across the countries and to primarily to develop psychiatric knowledge, skills imparting, to help harmonise across countries of sharing the best psychiatric practices to impart knowledge sharing through website and interactive webinar learnings.

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Young psychiatrists

I plan to work across AFPA countries to offer training

modules along with Rajiv Tandon, Mohan Isaac, Vinay Lakra, Roger Ng, E. Mohan Das, René Samaniego, Nova Riyanti Yusuf, Samudra Kathriarachchi, Gautam Saha. We all need to join hands to help across AFPA region propagate evidence-based best practices in psychiatry.

The success in most recent 2022 9th WCAP Congress at Hyderabad, we had a good nine hours of mentoring by Afzal Javed, Rajiv Tandon, Mohan Isaac and myself where we honoured 42 young psychiatrists across 28 AFPA countries.

AFPA has now emerged as an important regional association and its affiliation of World Psychiatric Association is going to be important aspect of its future rôle in international psychiatry. Active partnership of Asian member societies in the AFPA mission and philosophy.

Academic knowledge sharing

We need to develop a team of experts to exchange information across our region. I am happy to be associated with recent Philippines Psychiatric Association's national meeting, which were kind enough to give one symposium during plenary in which myself, René Samaniego, Roger Ng and Malcolm Hopwood presented a symposium, "Update on Trauma." I request all national leadership of various AFPA countries to involve AFPA during their national meetings.

The WPA Regional Congress Kolkata

We are organizing WPA Regional Congress at Kolkata, 14-16 April, 2023, under leadership of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Psychiatric Federation, a member of WPA and AFPA. I am a scientific chair and Gautam Saha is organising chair. All are invited.

Academic exchange

I request all leaders of AFPA to actively make our region a bed of academic activities to give opportunity for scientific exchange. Please be sharing your activities with Winston W. Shen for knowledge sharing in *the Bulletin of the AFPA*.

Active partnership of all our AFPA member societies in the AFPA functioning is continuously supporting AFPA's mission and philosophy. We are witnessing a global change in understanding of mental health issues, we are still far behind in many aspects of provision of an ideal mental health care for our patients.

We do live in the 21st century but when it comes to stigma and discrimination for our patients and equality for our profession, we are still struggling a lot and stay far behind the acceptable standards of modern civilisation. I hope with the support of our AFPA member societies and with the continuous guidance from our leaders in psychiatry, AFPA will also be able to highlight all other challenges and problems in our speciality. I once again thank all of you for your support to AFPA and look forward for receiving your feedback and further input to our future work. (I declare no conflicts of interest in writing these messages.)

G. Prasad Rao

Schizophrenia and Psychopharmacology Division,
Asha Hospital, Hyderabad, India

Corresponding author. 298, Road No. 14,
Banjara Hills, Hyderabad - 500034, Hyderabad, India

E-mail: G. Prasad Rao <prasad40@gmail.com>

(Editor's note: Rao is AFPA president, 2022-2024.)

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE AFPA

Diah Setia Utami, Elected to Be the AFPA President-elect, 2022- 2024



Diah Setia Utami, M. D. was elected as the president-elect at the 9th World Congress of Asian Psychiatry (WCAP) in Hyderabad, India. At the time of the election, she was the president of the Indonesian Psychiatric Association (2019 - 2022) .

In 1984, Utami graduated University of Diponegoro, Semarang and became medical doctor. She completed her psychiatric training and received her master degree of hospital administration at University of Indonesia, Jakarta. After her graduation from the University, she focused her interest in prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Drug addiction was the important social problems affecting the large number of the young population in Indonesia.

In 1997 and 1999, Utami was enrolled in the training of women counselor on drug abuse supported by Colombo plan in India. Since then, she participated in many training programmes, such as on methadone maintenance treatment, psychosocial intervention on drug addiction, and family therapy. In 2016, she received her doctor degree at the Faculty of Public Health, University of Indonesia, Jakarta. In recent years, she supervised the rehabilitation programme of National Narcotics Board as the prime trainer.

Also, Utami keeps her position as the chair of International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP), and Indonesia National Chapter. She was the vice chair of Indonesia Psychiatric Association (PDSKJI) from 2016 until she was elected as the president of Indonesian Psychiatry Association.

Personally, I am glad to know that the next WCAP will be held in Indonesia. Indonesia has a population of about 250 million and the geopolitical importance is increasing in Asia. Please allow me to reflect personal memory about Indonesia. I first visited Jakarta and Surabaya in 1994 with the medical students of Kobe University. Then

I met Kusumanto Setyonegoro, founder of the Indonesian psychiatry and Sasanto Wibisono, Department of Psychiatry at the University of Indonesia. We discussed and started the collaborative research in the field of psychiatry between Indonesia and Japan supported by Japan Society of Promotion of Science (JSPS). Also, I worked as JICA consultant to establish the Tropical Disease Research Center (TDRC) at the Airlangga University in Surabaya. We organised the symposium on psychiatry and traditional healer at the newly completed TDRC. International Center for Medical Research (ICMR) of Kobe University was a core to develop collaborative research projects with Universities in Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand. Also, Kobe University dispatched the relief team to Indonesia at the tsunami disaster in 2004.

I was at the ICMR Kobe University from 1994 to 2005. These memories about Indonesia are precious to me. In addition, at the stage of the AFPA under the danger of the breaking up, Eka Viola, then the president of IPS, was firm in supporting us. I am grateful to IPS and the Indonesian psychiatrists for the AFPA existence.

Today, Indonesian psychiatry is facing many challenges. In spite of its big population, the number of psychiatrists is less than 1.000. Based on the Indonesian population, one psychiatrist needs to take care of more than 200,000 citizens. Also, many psychiatric facilities are situated in big cities. Most patients with mental diseases are in the hand of traditional healers or chained without adequate treatment. Indonesian psychiatry was often criticized as violating basic human rights of the mentally ill. The government and Indonesian psychiatrists worked hard to improve the conditions of the mentally ill recently. Indonesia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 and Mental Health Law was formulated in 2014.

I trust that Indonesian psychiatrists can further improve the services for the mentally ill through hosting the 10th WCAP in 2024. Please join me to congratulate on Utmai's courage and the chance of Indonesian psychiatrists to sponsor the 10th WCAP. (The author declares no conflicts in interests in writing this article.)

Naotaka Shinfuku

International Center for Medical Research,
School of Medicine, Kobe University, Kobe, Japan

Corresponding author. 1-7, 1104 Momochi-hama,
Sawara-ku, Fukuoka 814-0001, Japan
E-mail: Naotaka Shinfuku <Shinfukunaotaka@gmail.com>

(Editor's note: Shinfuku is the founding president of the AFPA.)



FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF AFPA NATIONAL PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETIES

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Organised by the PAT and Other Sponsors in Bangkok, Thailand, 19 November, 2022

The Psychiatric Association of Thailand (PAT), together with the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Thailand, Mission Faculty of Nursing Asia-Pacific International University, the Samaritans of Thailand, Pranaiya and Arthur Magoffin Foundation, the Suicide Prevention Society of Thailand, the Network of Happiness from Depression, as well as the Caregivers Alliance Thailand held the event for the International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day at Mission Faculty of Nursing Mission Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand on 19 November 2022.

This annual event is organised for people deprived of their loved ones by suicide, in a come-together with multi-disciplinary personnel for healing and support. The event included special talks by the representatives of each organisation, an art therapy session by an art therapist, and a cognitive behavioural therapist. Participants also attended a group activity commemorating those loved ones. The activities were intended to promote self-recovery and support as well as to renew a sense of belonging after grieving. (The authors declare no conflicts of interest in writing this feature.)



An exhibition on postpartum depression and maternal mental health

Kamonporn Wannarit[§]
Prakarn Thomyangkoon
Suttha Supanya
Chawanun Charnsil

Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine
Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

[§]Corresponding author, 2 Wanglang Road, Bangkok
Noi District, Bangkok 10700, Thailand

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E-mails: Kamonporn Wannarit
<kamonporn.wan@mahidol.edu>, Prakarn
Thomyangkoon <karn249@hotmail.com>,
Suttha Supanya <suttha.supanya@hotmail.com>, and
Chawanun Charnsil <chawanun.c@gmail.com>

*(Editor's note: Wannarit, Thomyangkoon, Supanya, and
Charnsil are chairman for international affairs,
committee member, secretary-general, and president,
respectively, of PAT.)*

RANZCP Published

Three Position Statements

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) has recently published three new positions position statements on autism, intellectual disability and conduct disorder.

These position statements provide guidance to RANZCP members, governments and services on how to meet the needs of these population groups and will be the foundation for future College advocacy for improving resourcing and mental health support for these population groups. (The author declares no conflicts of interest in writing this report.)

Vinay Lakra

RANZCP Head Office, Melbourne Australia
309 La Trobe Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia

Email: Vinay Lakra <president@ranzcp.org>

(Editor's note, Lakra is the president of RANZCP.)

The RANZCP Took Part in Sydney WorldPride Parades on 25 February 2023

The Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrist (RANZCP) along with 13 other medical colleges in Australia supported a joint medical float in

the Mardi Gras Parade as part of Sydney WorldPride 2023 on 25 February, 2023.

The float, and representation of the medical workforce who will be marching in the parade, will be a first for medical colleges. The RANZCP's participation demonstrates not only RANZCP commitment and support for LGBTIQ+ members and psychiatrists but for the broader LGBTIQ+ community and is consistent with the RANZCP's values and the prioritisation of equity in all that we do. (The author declares no conflicts of interest in writing this report.)



RANZCP fellow Warren Kealy-Bateman ahead of crowd in the 2023 WorldPride in Sydney

Vinay Lakra

RANZCP Head Office, Melbourne Australia
309 La Trobe Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia

E-mail: Vinay Lakra <president@ranzcp.org>

(Editor's note: Lakra is RANZCP president, 2021-2023.)

The TSOP Spring Meeting To Be Held in Taipei, 30 April, 2023

The Taiwanese Society of Psychiatry (TSOP) will hold its spring meeting on Sunday, 30 April, 2023 at the Eng-Kung Auditorium located on the campus of Taipei City Psychiatric Center. The theme topic of the meeting is "Personality Disorders and Stalking Laws: Treatment and Management. The TSOP President Chang-Jer Tsai will open the meeting. All meeting speakers are chosen from the experts of the TSOP membership.

During the morning sessions, the speakers will guide the audience in reviewing narcissistic, borderline, and schizoid personality disorders using a psychodynamic approach. They will also share how to use dialectical behavior therapy to construct a hierarchical treatment goal structure for borderline personality disorder treatment. The morning presentations include

"Reimagining Personality Disorders through Psychodynamic Models: The Case of Narcissistic and Schizoid Personality Disorders" and "Reimagining Personality Disorders through Psychodynamic Models: The Case of Borderline Personality Disorder," as well as "Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder." In the afternoon sessions, the speakers will address whether antisocial personality disorder is a pathological condition that can be treated and how to diagnose and establish a treatment and management plan for dealing with stalkers and toxic men. The presentations include "Can Antisocial Personality Disorder Be Treated?," "Starting with the Concept of "Toxic Masculinity: An Alternative Diagnosis for Personality Disorders," and "The Treatment and Limitations of Stalking Prevention Laws Regarding the Management of Offenders."

The TSOP spring meeting is an excellent opportunity for psychiatrist colleagues to gather together and enjoy the travel in the spring. We look forward to the participation of every TSOP member and would like to express our special thanks to the colleagues at Taipei City Psychiatric Center for their full support and enthusiastic help in organizing this meeting. (The author declares no conflicts of interest in reporting this feature.)



The main theme lantern in Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei, 2023



A Taipei lantern for reminiscence of collective childhood memory

Po See Chen

Department of Psychiatry, National Cheng Kung
University, Tainan, Taiwan

*Corresponding author. No 138, Sheng Li Road,
North District, Tainan 704, Taiwan

E-mail: Po See Chen <chenps@mail.ncku.edu.tw>

*(Editor's note, Chen is chairman of TSOP
academic organizing committee.)*

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**The 119th Annual Meeting of
the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology**
Psychiatry Looking to the Present and the Future
~Make the effort to provide the best medical care available, and to improve it for the future~

Date June 22 (Thu.) - 24 (Sat.), 2023 **Venue** PACIFICO Yokohama North

President **Masaomi IYO**
Department of Psychiatry,
Graduate School of Medicine and School of Medicine, Chiba University
Center for Forensic Mental Health, Chiba University

The 119th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology will be held at PACIFICO Yokohama North from Thursday, 22 June to Saturday, 24 June, 2023. Built on “all in one” concept, PACIFICO Yokohama is one of the largest convention complexes in the world, equipped with all the functions required for any type of convention, such as meetings, incentive conventions, exhibitions and events.



PACIFICO Yokohama North (Reprint permissions of three photos granted)

I have been a psychiatrist for about 40 years. During this period, pharmacological treatment, psychotherapy, physical therapy, and other treatments for psychiatric disorders have made an immense progress. Besides, although community care system for persons with mental illnesses is still insufficient, we feel in our everyday clinical practice that the system improves gradually. On the other hand, when we are treating patients, we are often unsure if we are really providing the best of the treatment and support options that are currently available.; not a day goes by that we do not think whether we could do something better, whether there are better treatment, whether we could create better support options to make life easier for patients. I believe it is essential to share experience with colleagues, in addition to gaining sufficient knowledge, so as to accept patient's hopes and make the best choice. I also believe that it is important to identify unmet needs, to search solutions from various perspectives, and to advance research toward development of breakthrough solutions. Besides, I suppose that the application of the fruits of advances in psychiatry can greatly benefit the improvement of mental health in various social situations including work and education, family, sports, and performing arts; I believe it is important for psychiatrists to take an active rôle in creating a more livable society. Getting together of specialists in psychiatry to exchange their knowledge, opinions, and findings is useful to promote these efforts.

The COVID-19 affected our annual meetings as well. However, prevention and therapy methods have been established, and the pandemic seems to settling down gradually. I strongly expect that psychiatrists nationwide will meet in the 2023 annual meeting for a heated discussion on the present and future of theoretical and clinical psychiatry.

The programme of the JSPN annual meeting is still at the planning stage at the press time. Please keep checking at the JSPN website at www.jspn.or.jp for the contents of programme of the annual meeting and the updates. Let us meet at the venue! (The author declares no conflicts of interest in writing this announcement.)



Two photos of the skyline of Yokohama, day and night

Masaomi Iyo

Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medicine,
Chiba University, Center for Forensic Mental Health,
Chiba University, Chiba City, Japan

Corresponding author. 1-8-1 Inohana, Chuo-ku,
Chiba City, Chiba 260-8670, Japan
E-mail: Masaomi Iyo <iyom@faculty.chiba-u.jp>

(Editor's note: Iyo is the president of the 119th annual meeting of the JSPN, 2023.)

**RANZCP Congress,
to Be Held in Perth, Australia
28 May to 1 June, 2023**

I am delighted to announce that the annual Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) Congress will be held from 28 May to 1 June, 2023 in Perth, Australia.

The scientific program will explore the theme “New Horizons, Connected Futures” as across the world we begin to evaluate our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and how loss of connection has affected mental health.

I look forward to welcoming colleagues from across the region. If unable to attend, we encourage you to join us for the virtual program. More information about the Congress is posted at www.congress.ranzcp.org. (The author declares no conflicts of interest in writing this announcement.)



The skyline of Perth, the capital city of Western Australia

Vinay Lakra

RANZCP Head Office, Melbourne Australia
309 La Trobe Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia

E-mail: Vinay Lakra <president@ranzcp.org>

(Editor's note: Lakra is the president of RANZCP, 2021-2023.)



FROM PRESIDENTS OF AFPA-AFFILIATED PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETIES

Ramaswamy Viswanathan from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India Elected to the APA President-Elect

On February 17, 2023, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) announced that Ramaswamy Viswanathan, M.D., Dr. Med.Sc., had been elected President-Elect of the APA. His term of APA President-Elect starts May 25, 2023, and he becomes the APA President on May 9, 2024 at the close of the APA annual meeting.

Viswanathan will be the second Asian-American APA President after Dilip Jeste M.D., who served from 2012 to 2013. He will also become 1 of about 7 international medical graduate APA presidents. He graduated from Madras Medical College, University of Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Viswanathan is a tenured professor and interim chair of psychiatry, director of C-L psychiatry (including child and adolescent, substance use and women's health consultations) and C-L psychiatry fellowship, and core faculty of geriatric psychiatry fellowship and psychiatry residency at the State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Health Sciences University, Brooklyn, New York, USA.

Viswanathan is certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties in general psychiatry, internal medicine, consultation-liaison, geriatric, addiction and forensic psychiatry. He is an APA Distinguished Life Fellow. His research has been in physician communication, ethics, innovations in psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, treatment adherence in gynecologic cancers, children's sickle cell disease, HIV, and substance use. He practices public and private psychiatry.

When he assumes that rôle of the APA president in May 2024, Viswanathan's priority agenda are to:

- enhance the quality of care patients receive
- fight inadequately qualified people encroaching into psychiatric practice
- augment the psychiatry workforce
- to increase funding for mental health research and services, including for substance use disorders, climate psychiatry, and children's mental health
- ensure satisfactory clinical work conditions and adequate reimbursement.
- reduce third-party-imposed burdens on public and private psychiatric practice
- promote psychiatrists' well-being
- foster trainees' and early career psychiatrists' professional development

(This information is originated from the APA website with additions from the author, who declares no conflicts of interest in writing this invited news report.)

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A 2010 photo of a discussion on patients' rights for treatment and medical necessity at SUNY Downstate Medical University at New York, USA (Photo courtesy of Ellen Dallager & APA Psychiatric News)
From left: Ramotse Saunders, Sharath Puttichanda, and Viswanathan

Francis G. Lu

Department of Psychiatry, University of California,
Davis, California, USA

Corresponding author. 18455 Chelmsford Drive,
Cupertino, California 95014, USA

E-mail: G. Francis Lu <francislumd@gmail.com>

(Editor's note: Lu is an emeritus Luke and Grace Kim Professor in Cultural Psychiatry at UC-Davis, California, USA. He was the chair, APA Council on minority mental health and health disparities (2002-2007). Lu has continuously presented at every APA annual meeting since 1984.)

Planned Activities of the JYPO

The Japanese Young Psychiatrists' Organization (JYPO) has continued the human interaction since the COVID-19 epidemic, switching the activities to online. Online interaction is convenient, and it is easy to organise international exchanges and national events because it allows people who are difficult to connect geographically to meet each other. On the other hand, we realise that face-to-face interactions are essential for getting to know each other better and sharing detailed and intense experiences.

Our activities are changing to incorporate the best of both methods of communication, to support the development of our members:

The 20th CADP

The 20th Course for Academic Development of Psychiatrists (the 20th CADP) will be held in Tokyo, Japan, 10-12 March, 2023, bringing together 35 young psychiatrists for presentations, posters, group discussions, and international exchange with a view to presenting at an international conference. This event, which has been held since 2002, has not been possible for the past two years due to the COVID-19 disaster, so an alternative online event was held. While there is a certain value in this casual international exchange, there is also a growing awareness among the participants that face to face interaction is necessary to break down psychological barriers and to become career partners in the future of psychiatry.

For this reason, this year's CADP will be held locally for the first time in three years, and as in previous years, psychiatrists from abroad will be invited to participate, making it a meeting of psychiatrists as it has always been. Norman Sartorius (Switzerland) and Masaru Murakami (Pakistan) of the Peshawar Association, which conducts medical and water irrigation activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan, will deliver special lectures.

The JYPO plans to hold another international exchange event in Japan next year and beyond. We would be happy if you could introduce us to young physicians.

Participation of the JYPO in the 2025 PRCP Congress in Tokyo

The joint conference of the 21st annual meeting of the Pacific Rim College of Osteopaths and the 7th annual meeting of the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry (WACP) is scheduled to be held in Hamamatsu-cho, Tokyo, in the fall of 2025. The JYPO will be involved in some of the planning and preparation of the international exchange events and symposia.

Details are still being worked out, but we will be managing a place where young psychiatrists can interact with each other and collaborate on research projects. Please wait for the announcement for more information in the future.

The JYPO will continue to work as a hub for psychiatrists and to create a "chemical reaction" for better psychiatry through international and regional exchanges, and will continue to friendly collaborate with the AFPA. (The author reports no conflicts of interest in writing this report.)

Morio Aki

Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medicine,
Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

Corresponding author. 54 Shogoin-Kawara-cho,
Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 6068507, Japan

E-mail: Morio Aki <morioaki@kuhp.kyoto-u.ac.jp>

(Editor's note: Aki is the president of the JYPO.)

The 2023 TSBPN Spring Conference To Take Place in Taipei, 18 March, 2023

The 2023 Spring Conference of the Taiwanese Society of Biological Psychiatry and Neuropsychopharmacology (TSBPN) will take place at the Evergreen International Convention Center on 18 March, 2023.

The conference topic will focus on non-invasive brain stimulation. The president of TSBPN, Ya-Mei Bai will give an opening remark and introduce the first speaker, Mark George of USA, the top and world-famous neurostimulation researcher. He will give a keynote speech on "An Update on Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) for Treating Psychiatric Diseases." Cheng-Ta Li from Taipei Veterans General Hospital, and Chi-Hung Juan from National Central University, Taiwan will give lectures on the clinical and research perspectives of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) and transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS).

Additional talks will focus on the clinical application of neurostimulation, particularly rTMS, to different mental disorders, including autism spectrum disorder, substance use disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and major affective disorders, as well as neurological diseases.

TSBPN welcomes psychiatrists, psychologists, neuroscience researchers, and students to join the 2023 Spring Conference. (The authors declare no conflicts of interest in writing this announcement.)

Ya-Mei Bai
Mu-Hong Chen

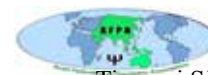
Department of Psychiatry, Taipei Veterans General
Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan

Corresponding authors. No. 201, Section 2,
Shih-Pai Road, Taipei 112, Taiwan

E-mails: Ya-Mei Bai <yambi@mail2000.com.tw> and
Mu-Hong Chen <kremer7119@gmail.com>

(Editor's note: Chen is the secretary of TSBPN.)





Tianmei Si[§]
Yan Zhang[†]
Kazutaka Ikeda^{††}

The 8th AsCNP Congress

To Be Held in Xi'An, 22-24 September, 2023

Asian College of Neuropsychopharmacology (AsCNP) is an active academic society, established in 2008. The mission of AsCNP is to encourage research and collaboration and promote the communication of ideas in convergent disciplines of neuropsychopharmacology in Asia. The biennial congress has been an important platform for Asian and international colleagues in academic exchange, scientific research and educational training.

The 8th AsCNP Congress will be held in Xi'An, 22-24 September, 2023. This Congress schedules plenary speeches and symposia, focusing on the novel psychotropic drugs, new technologies and the new findings in neuroscience, with the purpose for "Lighting up the way, Lifting up the world" by these advance in the field of neuropsychopharmacology."

We are confident that the academic exchange at the regional and international level will promote the development of this discipline in Asia. For more information, please see the announcement at the AsCNP website at www.ascnp.org/index.html.

Xi'An, a fascinating historical city, is opening the warm arms to welcome participants from all over the world. We hope all participants will not only enjoy the pleasure of sharing the latest scientific knowledge but also enjoy your stay in Xi'An.



The Mausoleum of Qin Shihuang (Terra Cotta Warriors)



Drum Tower (Golou)

[§]Department of Clinical Neuropsychopharmacology,
Peking University Institute of Mental Health,
Beijing, China

[†]Department of Psychiatry, The Second Xiangya
Hospital of Central South University, Changsha,
Hunan, China

^{††}Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
and Addictive Substance Project, Tokyo Metropolitan
Institute of Medical Science, Tokyo, Japan

[§]Corresponding author. No. 51 Huayuanbeilu,
Haidian District, Beijing 100191, China

E-mails: Tianmei Si <si.tian-mei@163.com>, Yan Zhang
<yan.zhang@csu.edu.cn> and Kazutaka Ikeda
<ikeda-kz@igakuken.or.jp>

(Editor's note: Si is the present president of AsCNP.
Zhang is the council member of AsCNP. Ikeda is the
previous president of AsCNP.)



An Update of the 2023 PRCP Congress in Kuala Lumpur



Kuala Lumpur skyline with Petronas Twin Tower

In the last issue of *the Bulletin of the AFPA* (Volume 9, No. 2), Chee Ng (Australia) did a preliminary announcement of the Congress of the 20th Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists, to be held Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 13-15 October, 2023. The updates are:



The confirmed speakers at the 20th PRCP Congress. These speakers include Leslie Citrome (USA), Helen Hermann (Australia), Chee Ng (Australia), Mian Yoon Chong (Taiwan), Kua Ee Hock (Singapore), and Adeeba Kamarulzaman (Malaysia).

The proposed titles of plenaries and symposiums include Methods and challenges in epidemiological investigations, Challenges of mental health research with COVID-19, Human rights based mental health care: supporting alternatives to coercion, The best ways to prevent depression, Mental health in the city, Green urbanism in preventive medicine. Adult neurodevelopmental disorders, ADHD and its complex presentation, and Supportive technology to realize resilient life for patients in psychiatry and neurology.

On behalf of local organising committee of the Congress, I am inviting your participation. Please come

to the 20th PRCP Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 13-15 October, 2023. (The author declares no conflicts of interest in writing this update.)

Ahmad Hatim Sulaiman

Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding author. 50603, Lembah Pantai, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail: Ahmad Hatim <hatim@um.edu.my>

(Editor note: The author of local convenor of the 20th PRCP Congress. Ng is the president of the PRCP.)



Commentary

(The opinions expressed here are author's personal opinions, and they do not necessarily reflect on those of any organisations.)

Psychiatrists' Attitude toward Polypharmacy: Research on Asian Psychotropic Prescription Pattern

In medical settings, prescription patterns vary across countries and change over time. The prescribing patterns of psychotropic drugs in Asia have been evaluated by various collaborative research (Research on Asian Psychotropic Prescription Pattern, REAP) since 2001 [1]. Some of the studies showed a high prevalence of psychiatric polypharmacy in Japan. Polypharmacy in psychiatry refers to prescribing many psychotropic medications together at the same time to a patient. This kind of psychiatric practice is generally not recommended because it can increase side effects and economic burdens. Following the results of the frequent psychiatric polypharmacy in Japan, a policy to reduce polypharmacy was established. At first, patients with prescriptions of ≥ 3 anxiolytics or ≥ 3 hypnotics were targeted at reducing reimbursement of the national medical fee for service since the change of medical fee in 2012. Until 2018, every two years, the psychiatric prescription patterns under the reduced reimbursement for medical fee had been extended. Through this process in reducing reimbursement for medical fee on psychiatric polypharmacy, the polypharmacy rate has been remarkably decreased.

But psychiatrists began to question whether the reduced polypharmacy means improved quality in the treatment. Some also suggested that extreme reduction of psychiatric polypharmacy might worsen medical treatment because the benefit of "rational polypharmacy" is lost.

"Rational polypharmacy" has recently been proposed based on several studies. Polypharmacy should be rational when its effect is supported by medical evidence. For example, the combination of clozapine and aripiprazole among patients with schizophrenia is rational, because a nationwide cohort study in Finland showed that it reduces the risk of psychiatric rehospitalization [2]. In addition to evidence-based polypharmacy, when every monotherapy is not effective for a patient, as the next step, combination treatment and polypharmacy would be regarded as "rational."

When psychiatrists choose the best possible treatment for the patients, a balanced attitude is needed in which monotherapy is the first-line treatment, while polypharmacy is a rational treatment option.

A balanced attitude toward polypharmacy is important in clinical settings. On the other hand, this attitude can be influenced by polypharmacy policies such as the above-mentioned reduced reimbursement for medical fee in Japan. The association between policies and psychiatrists' attitudes toward polypharmacy has been unclear. To understand this association, we did a survey on psychiatrists from 34 different countries. Our study was published in 2021[3].

In the study [3], we developed copies of questionnaire about psychiatrists' attitudes toward polypharmacy (PAP), case-vignette questionnaire for understanding treatment decision-making in clinical settings, and questionnaire about five (scientific, clinical, economic, political, and cultural) factors which are related to the rise of polypharmacy according to Ghaemi [4].

A total of 347 psychiatrists across 34 countries responded to the anonymous copies of questionnaire. We found that the high PAP scores indicating a positive attitude toward polypharmacy are associated with the decision-making toward polypharmacy. Furthermore, the results of multiple regression analysis showed that the limitation on the use of psychotropic drugs, or the policy factor, is associated with a negative attitude toward polypharmacy beyond the country/cultural differences [3]. Across countries with different cultures, a positive attitude toward polypharmacy in Korea is shown while a negative attitude in India and Nepal [3].

In the best possible psychiatric treatment, a balanced attitude toward polypharmacy is needed for psychiatrists while their attitude toward polypharmacy is influenced by policy factors [4]. If policies on polypharmacy do not consider "rational polypharmacy," as differently seen in individual clinical cases, producing worsen medical treatment. Policies considering rational polypharmacy should be established.

Readers are warned not to over-interpret our study results [3] because the study has three major limitations:

- The attitude and decision-making were evaluated using self-reported copies of questionnaire. The method of self-reporting might be distorted by various factors including responders' mental state.
- Study participants in our study [3] could be more interested in polypharmacy. After all, the questionnaire was voluntary.
- We did not evaluate other factors such as socioeconomic status than known five factors [4] in our study.

In summary, I suggest that more collaborative REAP. I also believe that to address the above-noted limitations in future studies in the prescription attitudes and patterns and their related factors can strengthen our study findings



of this kind of studies have the potential in contributing improved psychiatric treatment for patients. (The author declares no conflicts of interest in writing this article.)

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Yukako Nakagami

Headquarters Counseling Office, Student Support Center,
Agency for Student Support and Disability,
Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

Corresponding author. 54 Shogoin-Kawara-cho,
Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 6068507, Japan

E-mail: Yukako Nakagami
<nakagami@kuhp.kyoto-u.ac.jp>

(Editor's note: Nakagami is a vice ex-president of the
Japanese Young Psychiatrist Organization, 2018 – 2020.)



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