

Meeting Report: 4th APSAAR Conference

The Asia-Pacific Society for Alcohol and Addiction Research (APSAAR) held its 4th conference jointly with the 5th International Drug Abuse Research Society (IDARS) on 18-21 August 2015 at the Westin, a beautiful 5★ hotel in the heart of Sydney, Australia. Prof John Saunders, a senior APSAAR Advisor, hosted the meeting. A full day, plus additional sessions later in the meeting, was devoted to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, both to highlight this issue in our societies, especially in indigenous communities, and in honour of Ken Warren and his contribution to the field. The main session included a talk by the Honourable Sharman Stone, Member of Parliament in the Australian Federal Government, on the role of governments in addressing FASD, as well as many speakers from our region and across the world.

The conference attracted 202 delegates comprising addiction scientists and basic researchers, clinicians, nurses, and social workers, from 20 countries: 14 in the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, Cambodia, Chile, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Réunion, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States of America), plus Brazil, France Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. The gender balance was almost even, with 96 female and 106 male attendees. Over 100 abstracts for oral and poster presentations were received.

The congress was opened by Prof Saunders (Chair) and Dr Syed Ali (for IDARS), with the Heads of NIAAA, ISBRA, and APSAAR presiding. The meeting comprised two concurrent oral sessions on each of three days, with three concurrent sessions on the Wednesday. The sessions covered many areas. In addition to FASD, topics included The Impact of Addictive Disorders in Asia (both alcohol and substance use), Internet Addiction, Infection and Addiction, The Vulnerable Brain, Preventing Drug-seeking and Relapse, The Victims of Alcohol Misuse (Impacts on Indigenous Children), Genetics, Behavioural Sensitization, Substance Use & Relaxation, The Nature & Diagnosis of Addictive Disorders, Translational Research, and Pharmacology & Toxicology, together with sessions devoted to particular drug classes: Anæsthetics, Psychostimulants, Opiates, Cannabis, & Medicinal Cannabinoids. There was an Early Career Psychiatrists' Symposium, several sessions for free oral communications, and daily poster sessions. There was very good appreciation by attendees of the broad range of topics covered, as well as of the opportunities provided for young researchers & professionals from our region to present their work in talks and posters: the latter element was strongly advocated by Ken Warren and colleagues. The meeting also provided a recruiting ground for APSAAR, a task we are still actively pursuing

The 5th APSAAR conference will likely be held in Tainan, Taiwan in the Spring of 2017, with Prof Ru-Band Lu as the local host. Further details will be provided as they become available.

Peter Dodd

UQ, Australia