



By: Richelle Joy D. Bayson, MD, Ma. Theresa M. Collante, MD



Phenomenal as a word to describe the 2019 Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA) Annual Meeting is an underestimation. With the theme, “Rheumatology Connects...,” the meeting indeed convened and *connected* an astounding count of 684 participants at the SMX Convention Center, Lanang, Davao City on 7-9 March 2019.

The 2-day scientific activity centered on holistic and integrated approach in the field of Rheumatology with primary aim of better understanding of the complexities of autoimmune and auto-inflammatory disorders. Very interesting and novel topics delivered by top-notch local and international faculty kept the audience, composed of rheumatologists, trainees, and medical students, actively engaged up to the last lecture.



PRA Board of Trustees with International Speakers

PRA 2019 Annual Meeting International Faculty

Prof. Daniel Tak Mao Chan (Chief of Nephrology, Department of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong)

Prof. Marietta M. De Guzman (Chief of Clinics, Pediatric Rheumatology Center, Texas Children’s Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine, USA)

Prof. Chak-Sing Lau (Chair of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, Department of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong)

Dr. Sargunan Sockalingam (Head of Rheumatology, University of Malaya Medical Center, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

Prof. James Cheng-Chung Wei (Chief, Division of Allergy, Immunology and Rheumatology, Chung Shan Medical University, Taichung, Taiwan)



Welcome Reception (06 March 2019)

To welcome PRA members and guests, the Davao Rheumies prepared a sumptuous dinner at NorthCrest Resort, of course, Davao-style! For what's a better way to "connect" than to share a meal, especially if it is seafood fresh from the Davao Gulf? The night was filled with recollections of PRA 2018 meeting held in February last year, as well as remarks of eager anticipation of what this year's conference has to offer.



UST Rheumatology with Drs. Sandra Navarra, Chak-Sing Lau, and Sargunan Sockalingam

Day 1 (07 May 2019)

The convention commenced with a moving invocation, national anthem, parade of pillars, and welcome remarks by Dr. Tommy Bangayan, PRA 2019 over-all chair. The Lourdes Manahan Memorial Lecture was delivered by Cabinet Secretary Hon. Karlo Alexei Nograles who talked about Universal Health Care.



L: PRA President Dr. Julie Li-Yu and past presidents
R: Hon. Nograles on Universal Health Care

Sec. Nograles' lecture was followed by oath-taking rites of new fellows and diplomates and awarding of accreditation certificates to training institutions. UST Rheumatology graduates, Dr. Stamen Tupas, Dr. Aime Fabila, and Dr. Ma. Theresa Collante, were inducted as fellows, while Dr. Maricar Bayo-ang was inducted as diplomate. Section chief, Dr. Sandra Navarra, and training officer, Dr. Lyndon John Llamado, proudly received the certificate of 5-year accreditation for Adult Rheumatology fellowship-training program.



Top: UST Rheumatology graduates inducted as PRA fellows and diplomates

Bottom: Awarding of certificate of accreditation to UST Adult Rheumatology fellowship training program

The first plenary was given by Dr. Marietta De Guzman, a graduate of UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and UST Hospital pediatric residency, and presently Pediatric Rheumatology Clinic Chief of Texas Children's Hospital-Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA. Entitled "Infectious agents and autoimmunity," her lecture emphasized that infections can mount autoimmunity through a number of pathways by pro-inflammatory cytokine release and human antigen mimicry.



Dr. Sargunan Sockalingam, Head of Rheumatology, University of Malaya Medical Center, Malaysia, gave the second plenary lecture on “Heart and kidneys in hyperuricemia.” He said that while it is an easy decision to begin uric acid lowering therapy in a symptomatic patient, there are issues about decreasing uric acid levels in an asymptomatic individual, especially with regards to reducing cardiac and kidney risks. He stressed the importance of a holistic approach in controlling all factors rather than focusing solely on hyperuricemia detected by blood tests.



Dr. Sockalingam’s second lecture was about “Asking the right questions” in evaluating swollen joints. Important points that he mentioned were to ask history of recent trauma or strenuous physical exercise, to extensively check for infection, and to conduct focused medical history-taking and investigative procedures tailored to the patient’s clinical picture.

The morning session concluded with a discussion on “Sarcopenia and frailty in the elderly” by Dr. Ester Penserga. She defined sarcopenia as low muscle quantity or quality while frailty is an aging syndrome characterized by physiologic decline with age of multiple physiologic functions.



The afternoon session kicked off with an interesting and timely lecture by Dr. Lisa Traboco on how technology is revolutionizing health care. She shared

“apps” and websites that can assist physicians in daily clinical practice.



Dr. Sheila Marie Reyes, on the other hand, talked about how social media, particularly Twitter, may be used as a platform, not just for networking, but also for conducting discussions and sharing information during scientific meetings. She also gave tweeting tips and advise on social media etiquette.

Other topics discussed on Day 1 were “Targeting pain pathways in rheumatic diseases” by Dr. Melissa Villamin, “Approach to acute and chronic pain in rheumatic diseases” by Dr. Ronald Eullaran, “Hypercoagulable states: sifting thru possibilities” by Dr. Geraldine Zamora, and “Rheumatic diseases in children: when to worry” by Dr. Marietta De Guzman.



Clockwise: Drs. Villamin, Eullaran, Zamora, and De Guzman

Day 2 (08 May 2019)

UST Rheumatology is proud of its research outputs this year. Among 16 original research and 46 case reports, three papers of UST fellows-in-

training were chosen for oral presentation, as follows:

1. Interstitial lung disease among patients with connective tissue disease: Data from a 10-year patient census of a Rheumatology training center by **Dr. Rodeo Navarroza**
2. Clinical indications and response to Rituximab for refractory systemic lupus erythematosus: 10-year experience at a single institution by **Dr. Richelle Joy Bayson**
3. Refractory angioedema due to hypocomplementemic urticarial vasculitis in systemic lupus erythematosus successfully treated with rituximab by **Dr. Annabel Yap**



L-R: Drs. Navarroza, Bayson, and Yap ready for the oral presentation, supported by Drs. Li-Yu and Llamado



Other awards garnered were:

Best Image for “Bubbles in a Plum - Henoch Schonlein Purpura”) and “Bump and Twist from Behind” (Haglund deformity) by **Drs. Dominic Dela Cruz and Gerald Natanauan**, respectively.

Lastly, **Dr.**

Francis Cuenco’s study “Physical, Psycho-emotional, Social, and Spiritual Impact of Disease Among Lupus Patients” won Best Research Poster.

The research forum was a fitting starter for the second day of the meeting. Dr. Eric Jason Amante was first in the list of the distinguished PRA members to speak. His lecture about the “Eye, gut and joint interface” was followed by a talk on



“Drug induced auto-inflammatory syndromes” by Dr. Leonid Zamora. This symposium reminded the participants that drugs can be harmful, too, and that an interesting topic for research is fecal microbiome among Filipinos.

Dr. Chak-Sing Lau, Chair of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, Department of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, introduced IgG4 disease to the audience. It may involve nearly any anatomic site and majority of IgG4-related diseases respond to glucocorticoids particularly in early stages of the disease. His second lecture was on rheumatoid arthritis where he presented a novel algorithm for its management.



To further captivate the interest of the audience in the field of rheumatology, two interesting cases of connective tissue disease was presented. The first case was scleroderma with interstitial lung disease (ILD) and the second case was systemic lupus (SLE) with pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH). The interactive session was facilitated by Dr. Navarra and Dr. Juan Javier Lichauco, Chief of Section, Section of Rheumatology, St. Luke’s



sufficient potency to stop ongoing acute kidney injury. Strategies on steroid use is largely opinion-based and influenced by variations in patient characteristics and a balance between the risks of cumulative steroid exposure and adverse consequences of disease flares.



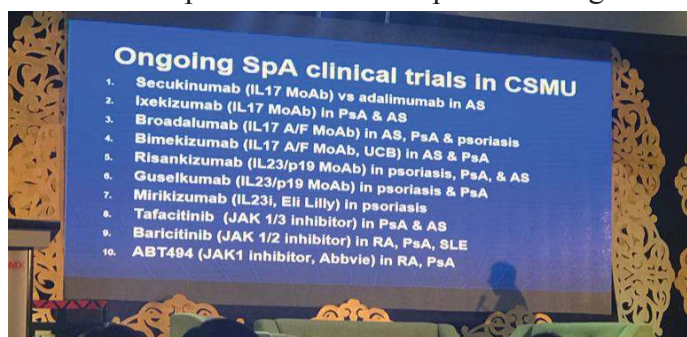
Medical Center, and covered treatment options for ILD and digital ulcers and treatment approach to PAH.

Dr. James Cheng-Chung Wei, Chief, Division of Allergy, Immunology and Rheumatology, Chung Shan Medical University, Taichung, Taiwan, discussed “New insights in pathomechanisms of spondyloarthritis (SpA). Numerous clinical trials being conducted in his center aim to increase understanding of SpA pathomechanism and lead to development of new therapeutic strategies.



Incidentally, March is International Women’s month, and PRA saved the best for last. This year’s meeting ended with lectures from two female PRA members, Dr. Heizel Bernadette Reyes, past president, and Dr. Sorrah Fiel Briones. Dr. Reyes discussed the “Role of IL17A inhibition in arthritis.”

Dr. Briones’ talk was entitled “Lupus is every clinician’s concern.” She emphasized that lupus management involves multispecialty care and the primary care physician’s role is crucial especially in early recognition and diagnosis.



PRA Annual Meeting 2019 culminated with the closing ceremonies, including an awarding ceremony for the winners of the research contests, induction of clinical members, and finally the business meeting for members.



Dr. Daniel Tak Mao Chan, Chief of Nephrology, Department of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, discussed the role of steroids in lupus nephritis. He reiterated that lupus nephritis is a severe condition and that acute disease requires prompt treatment that is of