Malaysian Society of Colorectal Surgeons (MSCRS)

Ismail Sagap | April Roslan

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, a group of like-minded surgeons formed a special interest group, with the objective of improving the quality of colorectal surgery in Malaysia. This group went on to officially register the Malaysian Society of Colorectal Surgeons (MSCRS) with the Registrar of Societies Malaysia in 2006. One of its key early achievements was successfully advocating for the recognition of colorectal surgery as a registrable sub-specialty by the Malaysian National Specialist Registry (NSR).

OFFICE BEARERS

The Society has an Executive Committee comprising the President, Immediate Past President, Vice President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and two Council members, each of whom serve a tenure of two years. They are elected at alternate Annual General Meetings.

MEMBERSHIP

Ordinary members and life members are Colorectal Surgeons recognized by the NSR, from both the private and public sectors. The latter includes those from the Ministry of Health, and academic surgeons who serve the Ministry of Higher Education. Associate membership is open to those who do not fulfil the criteria for full membership. As of 1st February 2021, the Society has 60 life members, two ordinary members and six associate members.

ACTIVITIES

Since its inception, MSCRS has pursued its goals of enhancing colorectal services, training and research through numerous activities. These include organizing scientific conferences, courses and workshops, providing access to academic literature and postgraduate training opportunities (including funding), as well as advocating for colorectal surgeons. This has led to colorectal surgery being amongst the most popular career choices amongst surgical trainees. In addition, MSCRS plays important roles in raising public awareness regarding colorectal diseases, and supports the activities of cancer survivors and allied health organizations. Dissemination of information is performed through its official website, www.colorectalmylie.org, and social media platforms.

POSTGRADUATE TRAINING

A formal structured colorectal surgical training programme was launched in 2007. This was a three-year clinical fellowship training programme for qualified general surgeons, coordinated by the Division of Medical Development in the Ministry of Health. An executive training committee is chaired by the National Head of Colorectal Surgical Services, and comprises local trainers from recognized training centres, as well as representation from the private sector. All committee members are members of MSCRS. Trainees are strongly recommended to undergo a one-year attachment overseas as part of their training programme, and MSCRS has played an important role in securing training posts and funding for this purpose. Successful candidates are eligible to be registered as Colorectal Surgeons in the NSR.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) ACTIVITIES

The MSCRS flagship conference is the annual Coloproctology Congress, which is usually held in March, in commemoration of its status as colorectal cancer awareness month. The Annual General Meeting is held in conjunction with this event. The diverse scientific programme caters for Colorectal and General surgeons, trainee surgeons, medical officers, enterostomal therapy nurses, allied health professionals and colorectal cancer survivors, and boasts an array of internationally renowned experts. Under normal circumstances,
in addition to the robust educational programme, participants are also able to experience the warmth and cultural richness of the host country. Unfortunately, the pandemic has meant that this year’s congress, from 4th to 6th March, will be conducted on a virtual platform. Nevertheless, we believe that the scientific content will continue to be of value, and indeed opens up opportunities for increased international participation.

MSCRS also co-organizes Colorectal Weekends, a CPD activity that is mandatory for Colorectal Fellows, and open to MSCRS members. These are held thrice a year in various cities of Malaysia. These scheduled events comprise interactive presentations of core topics, case discussions and critical appraisal of journal articles. In response to pandemic restrictions, the Colorectal Weekend has been adjusted into a hybrid format to accommodate both physical and virtual attendees whilst adhering to infection control measures.

Our Society also organizes technical skills training activities. These include live surgery demonstrations, proctorship and cadaveric workshops. We work closely with medical industry partners, who have continued to strongly support us through our transition to virtual platforms. These have allowed our surgeons to update knowledge and skills in a cost-effective manner, while minimizing time away from work. In addition, it facilitates international networking for both educational and research collaborations.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING
The MSCRS maintains strong links with many international colorectal surgical organisations like the Asia-Pacific Federation of Coloproctology (APFCP), ASEAN Society of Colorectal Surgeons (ASCS), American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS), European Society of Coloproctology (ESCP), International Society of University Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ISUCRS) and others. Despite its relative youth and small size, MSCRS has gained credibility internationally through our members and activities, so much so that we have been entrusted to host a number of international scientific conferences, most recently the APFCP Congress in 2019. Many of our members have solid academic credentials, having been invited speakers at international conferences, published extensively, or even appointed as editorial board members of international journals.

CONCLUSION
Our strength lies in the passion and determination of members, many of whom are leaders and contributors at both national and international level. We believe that by investing time and effort in the next generation of surgeons, we will be able to contribute usefully to the nation’s goal of optimal healthcare for all.