

President's Report at AGM 2020

Dr. Marco Ho

We are now living through a time of unprecedented challenges for our health service and society. We will face this massive task together. Most of us will be working on the frontline, and the Institute will be here for you with whatever support we can provide. As clinicians and providers of care, it will stretch us to the limit, but we will come through. Our absolute priority is to protect ourselves and our beloved ones during this period. Some of us have been making the case across the general public through mass media and social media, and some have even taken to HA and the government to ensure our colleagues feel as safe and protected as possible, whether that's testing, PPE, or equipping ourselves with the right guidance and information.

Just passing through the chaos of social unrest, Hong Kong is facing its second heavy blow back to back. Owing to our recollection and memories of 2003 SARS, Hong Kong people quickly adapted into "war" mode and have been very disciplined collectively in keeping the COVID-19 at the lowest possible rate. It is something the rest of the world is envy about and wanted to learn from. 8-9 months long battling against the pandemic we have claimed one victory after another through good civic citizenship and good science. The recent good turn-out of 1.8 million citizens orderly participated the Universal Community Testing under the staunch support of Central Government and volunteering of many devoted health care professionals which is a showcase. It shouts out loud to the rest of the world that HK is backing on its feet and heading out to the right path. I hope such scheme may reassure more people that it is perhaps about the time that we can gingerly resume some of our business and activities, though we should keep our high vigilance because there is still a long way to come over this pandemic.

Despite all the uncertainty, HKIA has taken on the challenges and tried best effort to deliver our duties and responsibilities. There are also major questions which need answers, such as how to support our allergy community through a period of great uncertainty with excessive use of chemical detergents, masking, indoor air pollution, allergens, school suspensions, emotional deprivation, and reduced outdoor activities. Making sure the needs of allergy communities are not overlooked is one of our key roles during this pandemic. We continued to provide quality professional education and training programmes, patient support and public engagement though our collective resolution, flexibility, and adaptability. We witnessed a dramatic decline or delaying in seeking elective medical consultation in the last few months. At the same time, there is an upsurge of eczema, contact and chemical hypersensitivities in the community. We empathised the allergy community that many of their health needs remain unmet. We strived better ways to address them. Tele-consult is becoming a new norm and may stay in for a longer term. At the Council level, we continue to support our members with the best research offer seed money to young researchers. Like many organisations, we are now working and meeting remotely.

Hong Kong Allergy Convention 2020 (HKAC 2020)

The theme for HKAC 2020 was confirmed as “Novel Diagnostics and Therapy for Allergy and Asthma”. It was suggested to have a 2-day programme for HKAC 2020 and parallel sessions for Allied Health and ENT were recommended. The venue was chosen as usual HKECC. The OC finally decided to postpone it next year. Instead a 1-day ASM was in lieu with. COVID -19 and Allergy is the theme. I am grateful to Prof. Gary Wong, Dr. Tak Lee, Dr. Chris Lai and many others have crafted a compact and stimulating programme for us and our colleagues. We have the top notched COVID 19 researchers and clinical leaders to join us. We have the most talented academic allergists to reveal the best insights of HK. I also thank all the sponsors for their endurance and generosity at this extraordinarily difficult time.

HKIA Award

Due to the postponement of Hong Kong Allergy Convention (HKAC) 2020, it was confirmed to postpone the nominations of HKIA awards to 2021 as well to follow the tradition to have the presentation ceremony held at HKAC.

Research Grant Application

It was led by Prof. Gary Wong and a panel of reviewers. A total of 8 applications were received before the deadline. Council members agreed to increase the grant to HK\$300,000 this around in view of positive responses. Eventually 4 well deserved study proposal were awarded with either partial or full funding. It was concluded that applicants who were junior researchers should have bonus points in the assessment of the research grant application. As it is considered as seeding money to encourage them in embarking on allergy related clinical or basic research.

Public Engagement

Joint Press Conference with the Hong Kong Allergy Association (HKAA) was successfully held on 27 June 2020 (Saturday) going in line with the World Allergy Week 2020. The focus of this press conference was on anaphylaxis care and prevention. Dr. Phil Lee has organized the patient interview by press and presented the up-to-date local research data. It was widely covered a media.

Originated by the idea from Dr. Tak Lee for better public/patient engagement, HKIA Ho has formed a new patient engagement working group in collaborations with Allergy Hong Kong. The first meeting was held on 16 December 2019 (Monday). A project on severe allergy registry was conceived and currently in active pursuit. It will devolve into education campaign for nurseries, schools, restaurants and hotels. It capitalizes on the current partnership and forges new momentum to deepen our understanding of immediate allergy at the community and preach for proper pre-hospital management. HKIA will provide academic supervision and finance governance.

A recent eczema quality of life survey was completed and released to public with the help of Dr. CK Yeung and a psychiatrist. It is disheartening to learn many eczema patients have depressions and suicidal ideation because of their poorly controlled eczema. Much more work awaits us to get around with it.

Membership

It was updated that HKIA currently had 418 ordinary members and 438 associate members, making up a total of 856 members. HKIA is very pleased to announce it has received a grant from AstraZeneca Hong Kong Ltd., Mundipharma (Hong Kong) Ltd, and Stallergens to support the registration fee for 90 new ordinary members (200 each) and 270 new associate members (100 each) to join HKIA. In addition, the Council of HKIA has decided to waive annual dues from all members effective immediately until further notice. Coupled with a progressive and comprehensive strategy to grow the discipline there has never been a better time to join HKIA to support your colleagues so please spread the news.

Conference Sponsorship and Scholarship

Dr. Andrew Wong was granted for attending the Congress of the European Rhinologic Society 2020 to be held on 21 - 25 June 2020 in Thessaloniki, Greece. The sponsorship amount was agreed at HK\$38,000. The conference sponsorship for local and overseas conference would normally be announced for application in July. It was discussed and concluded that the announcement would not be sent out at this stage due to the COVID-19. It was suggested to defer the announcement to quarter four of 2020. If attending overseas conferences was still not possible by then, the sponsorship could be used for supporting members to join the ASM 2020.

Education, and Training

Allergy Certificate Course with FMSHK

It was led by Dr. Alson Chan and we have had another successful run this year but on-line, with one lecture every Thursday for 6 weeks, scheduling on 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 July and 6 August 2020 (Thursday). It has expanded the attendance by two-fold with over 200 doctors, nurses and allied and health professionals attended and earned their CME/CNE/CPD marks. The feedback survey was overwhelmingly positive and very likely we will make it a yearly event whether physically or Virtually if FMSHK continues invite HKIA to be the provider.

Multi-specialty Medical Mega Conference 2020

HKIA has supported M3C as a co-organizer which also has postponed from 25 - 26 April 2020 postponed to 12 September 2020 and switched from physical to a virtual online programme .‘A basket of allergies’ was chaired by Prof. Ellis Hon co-chaired by Dr. Ludwig Tsoi from emergency medicine society. It was a nice cross over and well attended event.

Publication

Newsletter

HKIA e-Newsletter was successfully published consecutively despite the difficulties during the pandemic and the political unrest. I am in debt to Chief Editor Dr. Jaime S.D. Rosa Duque and his team. With the nomination from Chief Editor and endorsement from the Council, a few doctors had accepted to be the Associate Editor / Subeditor: Dr. Jason YK Chan from The Chinese University of Hong Kong/Prince of Wales; Dr. David Luk from United Christian Hospital for Skin Allergy section for the future; Ms. Chara Yip from Queen Mary Hospital as subeditor for the HKIA e-newsletter’s Allied Health Professional section. The authorship would be expanded to non-clinical scientists from the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. The content of the e-newsletter now was more relevant to daily clinical practice. Some articles would be written from the patients’ perspective. Ms. June Chan also invented a corner of “ask the expert” which enhances the readability to allied health

professionals and public. We welcome them and are grateful for bringing the newly formatted Newsletter to a greater audience.

HKIA-HKEC Harmonisation of Adrenaline Autoinjector Prescription

The respective organizations have nominated a panel expert which formed anaphylaxis alliance steering committee. Through questionnaires, data analysis, deliberation, and harmonization process among the members, a consensus statement was reached. The manuscript has completed and submitted to HKMJ for publication. I am grateful to Dr. Philip Li for his idea and dedication to execute and Dr. Axel Siu, President of Emergency Medicine College for facilitation.

Social

With social unrest and social distancing over the last 12 months, we have no choice but to defer all our plans. Our vivid memories stayed in the last event that Dr. Alfred Tam and Ms Vivian Lau had organised a wine tasting in conjunction faculty dinner of last ASM. We look forward the next occasion that we can have face-to-face social events

Relationship with Industrial Partners

HKIA has resolved to embrace increasing transparency and accountability for our projects to members and public. It was proposed by Dr. Tak Lee to review the relationship with industrial partners. It was raised that there was tension of over-marketing from the industries while HKIA should play a role by providing good advice and take note on the conflict of interest on the collaboration with industrial partners. A consensus practice guideline was drafted by Dr. Lee and endorsed by the Council and uploaded onto the website. The Council Members also need to declare their conflict of interest upon relevant issues.

Danone Nutricia agreed to be the Gold Sponsor with sponsorship of HK\$300,000 per year for two years (i.e. HK\$600,000 for 2 years in 2019 - 2021) to support the educational activities organized by HKIA. We vowed to make sure every dollar is well spent for the purpose of training and education.

Switching Presidency and Office-Bearers and Council Members

There would be nominations of new office-bearers and council members in 2020 AGM. President-elect Prof. Gary Wong will preside HKIA in coming 4 years. We all have high hopes that Prof. Wong with his international scholar calibre and vast networks will lead HKIA to navigate through the murky pandemic time and scale new heights. Council members who served for 4 years would step down. Prof. Ellis Hon has agreed to continue to serve as our Advisor. I am particularly grateful to Advisor Prof. Henry Chan and Honorary Treasurer Dr. Alice Ho for their unfailing support and most trustworthy advices during my tenure. Prof Chan cannot continue as our Advisor due to personal reason. We bid a fond farewell to him and wish him all the best to his future endeavours. Dr. Alice Ho will step down from Honorary Treasurer. We are in debt to her leadership and capable financial prudence and prowess that HKIA has a sustainable financial status which is so important that we can strive for our goals for common good.

A concluding remark

This has been a very disruptive period and I want to thank you for your patience and understanding in dealing with any postponement, alterations or cancellations. We will try to give ample notice regarding any changes, and please do continue to check our website frequently for the latest notices in relation to the ASM, Allergy Convention and all our activities.

I owe a huge THANK YOU to all my councils, in particular Office Bearers Dr. Helen Chan, Dr. Tak Lee, Prof. TF Leung, and Dr. Alice Ho for their candid advices, suggestions, actions and counsel. I would like to express my high admiration to the efficient works of MIMS and ICC's Secretariat. I am glad that despite the idling society by and large, many exciting developments are pushing forward inch by inch out of many people's good will within HKIA and from outside.

Finally, I also want to send a message of my appreciate for the solidarity displayed by our colleagues in China. We have witnessed their unparalleled efficiency in locking down the amplification epicentre Wuhan and the surrounding cities and their courageous combat against the virus-stricken crises and to cure a tsunami of critically-illed patients. Through such hard work, they have now earned their first round of victory. They have warned and bought time for the world. They have worked tirelessly to share their experiences by many superb quality research outputs. We thank them whole heartedly for their outstanding work in the recent HK Universal Community Testing project. There is no corner of the globe that is unaffected by COVID-19. Our sister professional bodies, right around the world, are confronting many of the same urgent questions we face in HK – how to ensure the optimal level of clinical care, balanced with the need to maximise community action to prevent, contain and suppress the virus. We will work with all our colleagues no matter where they are, to advocate for continuing attention to allergy communities and beyond.

We are doctors and healthcare workers, but we are also people with our own worries about childcare, elderly parents, and what our city and country will become at the end of this. There's no doubt that the storm will be intense, but we will weather it together. Stay safe and strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marco Ho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Marco Ho

President

Hong Kong Institute of Allergy