

SMA NEWS



VOLUME 42 No.07 JULY 2010
MICA (P) 103/02/2010

20/10 Trends In Eye Care



Prof Wong Tien Yin, Dr Chong Yeh Woei, Prof Donald Tan, and A/Prof Benjamin Ong



41st SMA National Medical Convention

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Published by the

Singapore Medical Association,
Level 2, Alumni Medial Centre,
2 College Road, Singapore 169850
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Email: news@sma.org.sg
URL: <http://www.sma.org.sg>
SMA Reg. No.: ROS 198/59 TAP

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20/10 Trends In Eye Care 41st SMA National Medical Convention

By Gracia Ong

The 41st SMA National Medical Convention was held on 10 July 2010 at the Sheraton Towers Singapore Hotel. The theme this year was “20/10 Trends In Eye Care”, focusing on educating the public and doctors in Singapore on major eye diseases. As such, the event presented updates on early prevention or treatment of common eye problems such as cataract, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, myopia and diabetic retinopathy.

Free eye screening was also presented to the public, an effort on the part of the SMA and the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) to provide benefits of early detection, so as to facilitate timely treatment. It was an inter-institution collaboration, and doctors conducting the eye screening came from SNEC, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, as well as the National University Hospital.

Prof Donald Tan, Director of SNEC, graced the event as keynote speaker, addressing on the topic, “Advances in Refractive Surgery in 2010” to a crowd of 372. The Public Symposium then commenced with concurrent English and Mandarin sessions, presenting on the topics “How To Stop Myopia Progression In Children?”, “Age-Related Macular Degeneration – New Understanding And Treatment”, “Cataract: Advances In Surgery And Post-Operative Care”, “Glaucoma – The



(1) Participants registering for eye screening. (2) Prof Wong Tien Yin presenting the Lunch Symposium, “What Is Macular Degeneration And How Do We Treat It?”

“Thief of Sight”, “How Does Diabetes Affect The Eyes?”, and “LASIK: Is It For Me?”.

For “How To Stop Myopia Progression In Children?” Dr Benjamin Chang and Dr Chua Wei Han conducted the English and Mandarin sessions respectively. The session explained the varied causes of myopia, and suggested strategies to control myopia progression such as good reading habits, the use of spectacles or contact lenses, as well as the application of cycloplegic eye drops.

Dr Adrian Koh and Dr Stephen Teoh helmed the lectures on “Age-Related Macular Degeneration – New Understanding And Treatment”, explaining the difference between dry and wet forms of AMD. As there are no proven preventive medications for AMD, monitoring one’s vision using an Amsler grid and the use of treatment methods were recommended instead.

In “Cataract: Advances In Surgery And Post-Operative Care”, Dr Vernon Yong and Dr Natasha Lim explained the advances in surgical techniques, implant designs and in post-operative care. The employment of improved techniques such as phacoemulsification and ECCE has reduced the size of the wound, resulting in lesser induced astigmatism and quicker recovery.

Glaucoma, often referred to as the “thief of sight”, accounts for 40% of blindness in Singapore. Dr Alicia How and Dr Kelvin Lee established that as the disease develops slowly, those afflicted might be unaware of loss of sight till too late. They emphasised the importance of good eye health and regular eye examinations to detect the problem early so as to prevent blindness.

Dr Edmund Wong and Dr Jacob Cheng spoke on “How Does Diabetes Affect The Eyes?” where the risk of diabetic retinopathy increases with the duration of diabetes. As gradual blurring of vision often goes undetected, they underscored the need to control blood sugar levels and blood pressure.

Lastly, Dr Lennard Thean and A/Prof Heng Wee Jin provided useful information on the session “LASIK: Is It For Me?” They also cautioned that those with high degrees of myopia outside treatment range and those with thin corneas might not be suitable candidates for the surgical procedure.

168 attendees attended the lunch



(1) Novartis booth. (2) Dr Ang Guan Lee, Head of Medical, Novartis (Singapore) Pte Ltd, and Dr Eric Hong. (3) Dr Benjamin Chang advises the audience on “How To Stop Myopia Progression In Children?” (4) Doctors and allied health professionals registering for the Medical Symposium. (5) Dr Natasha Lim advises on “Cataract: Advances In Surgery And Post-Operative Care”. (6) Dr Kelvin Lee presenting on “Glaucoma - The ‘Thief Of Sight’”. (7) Dr Tony Ho, Dr Julian Theng, and Dr Cordelia Chan speaking on “LASIK: Myths And Facts”. (8) Booth by Allergan. (9) Panel discussion on “Myopia: Do Atropine Eyedrops Work?” by Dr Inez Wong, Dr Leo Seo Wei, and Dr Pauline Cheong.



symposium sponsored by Allergan. The Singapore Eye Foundation Lecture, “What is Macular Degeneration And How Do We Treat It?” was presented by Prof Wong Tien Yin, the Organising Committee Chairman, as well as Director, Singapore Eye Research Institute. He spoke on risk factors such as genetics and smoking, and pointed out that patients with AMD were at higher risk of stroke, coronary heart disease, and cancer mortality. In addition, he also emphasised that dietary antioxidant supplements do not prevent AMD, but the best treatment should be the use of anti vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) agents via intra-avitreal injections.

The Medical Symposium in the afternoon comprised a mix of panel discussions and lectures. In “Myopia: Do Atropine Eyedrops Work?” Dr Inez Wong, Dr Leo Seo Wei and Dr Pauline Cheong explained that the treatment is better suited for children with family history of high myopia, as well as possessing rapidly progressing and high myopia. They also described that 1% Atropine nightly in one eye over the course of two years reduces myopia progression in children significantly by 77%, but parents should nevertheless be mindful of the side effects.

“Age-Related Macular Degeneration: 2010” was helmed by Dr Au Eong Kah Guan and Dr Gemmy Cheung. Dr Au Eong spoke on “Prevention” through recognising the risk factors of AMD, and noted that smoking-related eye diseases such as AMD are under-emphasised. Secondary prevention was recommended in the form of early detection and intervention, and those aged 55 and older should have regular eye examinations performed every two years. Dr Gemmy Cheung advised on “Treatment”, and elaborated on the two anti-VEGF treatments, Lucentis and Avastin. In addition, new combination procedures such as radiation in conjunction with present treatments are also being developed.

Dr Ronald Yeoh chaired the next session, “Cataract Surgery: Myths And Facts” with Dr Leonard Yip and Dr Lim Boon Ang. Debunking persistent myths such as cataract surgery being painful or dangerous, it has instead proven to be one of the safest, and most successful operations performed.

On “Glaucoma: 2010 Update”, Dr Wong



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(1) Participants at the keynote address presented by Prof Donald Tan. (2) A/Prof Heng Wee Jin speaking at "LASIK: Is It For Me?" (3) Eye Screening Team. (4) Booth by Pfizer (5) SMA Honorary Member Prof Aline Wong and Prof Wong Tien Yin (6) Dr Stephen Teoh fielding questions from the public. (7) Dr Bertha Woon, Dr Chong Yeh Woei, Dr Tammy Chan, Krysania Tan, and Dr Lee Yik Voon. (8) Dr Lim Boon Ang and Dr Leonard Yip. (9) Bausch & Lomb booth.

Hon Tym elaborated that given the advances in imaging techniques, this has led to more objective and quantifiable structural evaluation and diagnosis for glaucoma. Dr Loon Seng Chee continued with "How To Treat Glaucoma" and advised on procedures such as medication in the form of eyedrops, surgeries like trabeculectomy, and the use of laser treatment in acute glaucoma to allow fluid in the eye to drain.

Dr Julian Theng, Dr Cordelia Chan, and Dr Tony Ho formed the panel to discuss "LASIK: Myths And Facts". Dr Chan dispelled the myth of "bladeless" LASIK, and also pointed out that side-effects that arise from the procedure are common. In addition, she compared microkeratome and femtosecond LASIK procedures, differentiated by the means of flap creation and visual recovery. Dr Tony Ho then introduced Epi-LASIK, accomplished via surface ablation, which eliminates the need to create a cornea flap.

Lastly, Dr Bobby Cheng and Dr Ajeet Madhav Wagle spoke on "Diabetic Retinopathy: 2010 Update". Dr Cheng highlighted "Systemic Risk Factors And Prevention", bringing to attention the increased risk of blindness in diabetic patients as compared to those without. Reiterating that duration of diabetes is the most important risk factor, he recommended intensive glycemia, blood pressure and lipid control. The use of medication such as fibrates, and procedures such as Islet cell transplantation has also shown to reduce the onset and progression of the disease. Dr Wagle then elaborated on "Ocular Treatment", where laser treatments are used to seal or remove abnormal leaking blood vessels. In advanced cases, vitrectomy may be needed. Newer forms of treatment include intraocular steroid injection to reduce the amount of fluid leaking into the retina.

The 41st SMA Medical Convention closed to resounding applause. The Organising Committee wishes to thank keynote speaker, Prof Donald Tan, all speakers, guests and participants for taking time off to participate at the Convention. In addition, the Committee would also like to express appreciation to sponsors: Allergan, Bausch & Lomb, Novartis and Pfizer for their generous contributions.

SMA