

CASE STUDY

FAST FACT

APVRS 2017

8 - 10 December 2017

Kuala Lumpur
Convention Centre

 **Host organisation**
Malaysia Society of
Ophthalmology

 **Attendance**
1,600 Delegates

 **Economic Contribution
to Malaysia**
RM19.5million

APVRS 2017: A GATHERING OF “VISIONARIES” IN MALAYSIA



FOCUSING ON RETINAL HEALTH

2017 was indeed an eventful year for Malaysia’s business events industry. Before leaping into 2018, the country hosted 68 conferences, welcomed more than 24,814 international delegates and generated an estimated RM 212.5 million in economic impact.

To end the year with a bang, Kuala Lumpur was in the spotlight as the 11th Asia-Pacific Vitreo-retina Society Congress (APVRS 2017) brought together retinal specialists, general ophthalmologists, trainees, academicians, and practitioners from all over the world. These professionals gathered at the internationally acclaimed Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from the 8th – 10th December 2017.

APVRS congresses is one of the forefront events in the medical field, especially in the Asia Pacific region. Driven by the international organisation Asia Pacific Vitreo-retina Society (APVRS), the bigger picture of the annual event is to function as a platform for knowledge contribution that will ultimately enrich the field of vitreo-retina and more importantly, help overcome relevant diseases. Throughout the years since its first event in 2006, APVRS has managed to pull together a great deal of information and ideas exchange, as well as push collaborations and conversations amongst stakeholders.

The APVRS 2017 was organised by the Malaysia Society of Ophthalmology (MSO), a 45 year-old formidable organisation that had been playing a vital role in pioneering and promoting the profession of ophthalmology and the field’s specialities in Malaysia.

KEY INSIGHTS – THE CHALLENGES IN ORGANISING APVRS 2017

MSO, under the lead of its current President and APVRS 2017 Congress President, Dr. Kenneth Fong, won the bid to bring the event to Malaysia in 2015. The final presentation which took place in Sydney, Australia after the 17th APVRS council meeting saw the beginning of a two-year dedicated process in making a successful event. An event as major and impactful as APVRS 2017 came with its set of challenges. Armed with experience and knowledge on how to put together

impressive events, both MSO and APVRS tackled these challenges with strategic planning and effective tactical moves.

WHY APVRS 2017?

TAs global borders disappear, knowledge sharing platforms are abundant with the support of technological advancement. With multiple medical congresses being organised, the question was – **Why should delegates come?**

The first challenge faced by MSO was not just to attract delegates to Malaysia, but to also convince them that APVRS 2017 is still a strong and relevant avenue for professionals to convene and gain more than they bargained for. The solution? Dr. Fong and team clocked in the hours by travelling around the world constantly to convince field professionals in international meetings and in any speaking opportunities they had.

“This was when the support from the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) was crucial, the financial assistance to travel was very important for us. Nothing reaches out better than face-to-face and personal audiences to secure key opinion leaders for APVRS 2017.”

Dr. Fong and team also dug deep into their contacts and ensured that the word-of-mouth strategy carried its effectiveness. The ophthalmology community’s goodwill was overwhelming as delegates were willing to pass the word around and at the same time, confirm their presence.

CONTENT IS KING

As the APVRS Secretary General, Prof. Dennis Lam said, “putting aside the organising process, the challenge of any major conference is the core of the event, the content or in this case, the scientific programmes. APVRS must be able to gather key opinion leaders. The solution for the challenge is simple, APVRS tapped into its years of expertise, credibility and accountability in the field to ensure that the Congress was able to gather a slew of highly sought after leading speakers.”

“Throughout the years, we have our support from the international arena. It was the convincing part through meetings that truly enabled us to ace their presence. As for delegates, we promoted to those who have attended previous APVRS as well as the global societies,” he explained.

COMMUNICATIONS ABOVE ALL

With the APVRS secretariat being based in Hong Kong while the organising committee operates in Malaysia, a tight communication process was key in ensuring a smooth sailing and successful event.

The solution was to not only bulletproof the process through emails but more importantly, the Central Secretariat and the local team worked out a special template just for communications. The special template closed the gaps or any loop holes that could have potentially cause breakdowns and affect the event.

ALL EYES ON MALAYSIA

As a result, APVRS 2017 welcomed over 1,600 delegates from 56 countries. With 70 percent of international arrivals, the event generated an estimated RM 19.5 million in economic impact.

In support of Dr. Fong’s beliefs, Prof Lam, further verifies, “Kuala Lumpur is a vibrant city, it is well known for its diversity. But hardware aside, more importantly we are talking about people, the leadership. Dr. Kenneth Fong and his team faced tough competition but the presentation they put forward convinced us. With that, we were confident that Malaysia can do a good job.”



It is like bidding for the Olympic Games. It is a great responsibility to undertake, when you have decided to bring in a prominent event to the country. I think the committee saw this when it came to our efforts in convincing them. More importantly, the APVRS committee was able to see how much the government was backing the event. From the Ministry of Tourism & Culture Malaysia, to MyCEB and Tourism Malaysia

Dr. Fong

The recipe for success may be straight-forward, but the favourable results achieved was not an easy feat. As noted by Prof. Lam, quality scientific programmes played a crucial role as the core of the event. Due to the quality programmes, sharing and networking sessions, the legacy imprinted from APVRS 2017 in Kuala Lumpur is a solid one. Attaining the attention of the Ministry of Health, Malaysia (MOH), the authorities further elevated the level of expertise amongst the retinal specialists, through conducting many surgical and medical retinal sub-specialty programmes. As for sustainable efforts, the strong numbers of retinal specialists have prompted MSO to create an active Retina Specialist Interest Group that meets regularly to discuss interesting cases and at the same time organises public awareness programmes and scientific meetings.

Apart from the Congress proper, Malaysia also played her part in making delegates feel at home. During the event, delegates were presented with a plethora of activities to further acquaint them with the local culture, captivating the interests of many. Exclusive social programmes such as the Presidential Dinner in the luxurious Grand Hyatt Hotel and the Congress Party which offered experiential activities including pewter smithing, Chinese calligraphy, wood carving, basket weaving, batik printing and more. These experiences provided delegates with just a glimpse of the Malaysian culture and carved her image as melting pot society that is truly a gem in the heart of South East Asia.



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Prof. Dennis Lam

