

# The Third National Writing Workshop: 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012

Vui Heng CHONG, Clinical Research Unit, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital, Brunei Darussalam



Faculty members and participants of the writing workshop (picture taken at the Health Promotion Centre, Ministry of Health).

**First right:** Professor Jose Lapena, Professor in Otorhinolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, University Hospital of Manila, Secretary of APAME and Editor-in-Chief of the Philippines Journal of Otorhinolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery.

**Second right:** Professor Wilfred Peh, Professor in radiology in Khoo Teck Huat Hospital, Singapore (Vice President of the APAME and past Editor-in-Chief of Singapore Medical Journal.

The Third National Writing Workshop that was jointly organised by the Clinical Research Unit, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital and the Asia Pacific Association of Medical Editors (APAME) was held in the Health Promotion Centre (HPC) Ministry of Health from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012. This workshop brought back the two professors (Prof. Wilfred Peh Chin Guan and Prof. Jose Lapena) who were involved the previous year's workshop. The other faculty members included doctors from the Ministry of Health and lecturer from the Pengiran Anak Puteri Rasidah Sa'adatul Bolkihah (PAPRSB) Institute of Health Science, Universiti of Brunei Darussalam.

The format of the programme was similar to the previous workshops consisting of lectures and group work exercises. On the first day, the lectures covered on the basic structures and types of manuscripts, the importance of a good and appropriate title and keywords, how to write a good introduction (the Three Paragraphs rule) and the

importance of a well written materials and methods section. This was later followed by lectures on how to write effectively the results and discussion, ways of presenting statistics results (text, table or figures), preparation of effective tables or illustrations, preparation of references and manuscripts for submission.

Prof. Ranjan spoke on the structures (IMRAD: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) and types of manuscript (Review, Original articles, Case reports and Letters to the Editors). Prof. Peh highlighted the importance of a short and concise self-explanatory title. The title should also be catchy to attract the readers' attentions. He also mentioned that an abstract is essentially a very short summary of a manuscript and it should have adequate details to be stand alone. This is given the fact that abstracts are usually the first and only part of a publication that is read. Therefore, an abstract has to draw interest of the readers to continue reading the full article. Furthermore, the abstract

is usually the only part of a publication that is freely available from online resources (i.e. PubMed/Medline and Table of Contents). Prof. Peh also spoke on the importance of selecting the appropriate keywords that are listed in the Medical Subjects Heading [MeSH] of PubMed. Appropriate keywords allow a publication to be included in relevant literature search and hence increase the chance of citation.

Prof. Lapena taught the participants on the 'Three Paragraphs rule' for an effective introduction. The first paragraph introduces the concept, problem or disease, impact or significance and uncertainty/controversy in the literature. The second paragraph reviews the literature and the third paragraph discusses briefly the hypothesis, purpose and aim of the study. The 'Three Paragraph rule' provide a good glimpse on what the manuscript is all about. Participants were also taught that data can be presented either in text, tables or illustrations. However, data should not be presented more than once. Participants were also given insights into how submitted manuscripts are handled through the review processes, what editors and reviewers look for in a manuscript, how to deal with their comments and issues on authorship regulations and acknowledgement. Essentially, editors and reviewers are interested to know if a manuscript presents any new information for an original research or in the case of a case report, the novelty factor. A manuscript has to be written and presented well. Otherwise, even a good research can be rejected if it is poorly written. The importance of scientific writing for publications was also discussed.

In the group exercises, participants had to worked in groups, reviewing through sample publications. They had to comments on the weaknesses and mistakes of these publications. These ranged from inappropriate titles, keywords, lack of article, structures, poor grammar or choice of words, inap-

propriate illustrations that exposed the identities of patients, poor and inadequate referencing to inconsistent to incomplete authors and correspondence details. Judging from the participants' responses, it was obvious that they had learned from the workshop lectures. The rowdiness and the competitive nature of some participants further enhanced the atmosphere of the exercise sessions.

The second day of the workshop covered in more details the various types of manuscripts: case report, review article and letter to the editors. Participants were also informed on the roles of the Clinical Research Unit (CRU) and the Medical and Health Research Ethic Committee (MHREC). This was followed by another round of exciting group exercise.

Unlike the two previous workshops, the Third National Writing included a half day reviewers' workshop. Only those who have previously published or have reviewed for journals were invited to the workshop. Topics covered include the roles and responsibilities of reviewers, issues on plagiarisms, conflict of interest and disclosures. Other issues discussed include use of images from a patient for different type of publications (journals or website educational material), multiple reporting of an interesting case by different specialities, whether review should be open or blinded and single or double blinded, and issues on paying for publications.

Similar to the previous years, the participants found the workshop very useful and also provided good insights into the world of research and scientific writing. The feedback were positive and encouraging. We have also seen positive results in terms the number of publications and the number of research being carried out by past participants. Finally, we hope such workshops will instil interests and promote a research culture into our service only institutions.

---