

# Report on the 2023 Asia Pacific Hospice Conference (APHC) in Korea

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## Introduction

Attending the 2023 Asia Pacific Hospice Conference (APHC) in Korea was a profound learning experience for me. Although financial constraints initially prevented me from attending, I was grateful to have been chosen as one of the recipients of the prestigious Rosalie Shaw Travel Bursary Scholarship. This opportunity allowed me to immerse myself in the vast landscape of palliative care, networking with professionals from different parts of the world and enhancing my understanding of current advancements in the field.

## Key Learnings from APHC 2023

**Integrating Palliative Care in ICU Units:** One of the most impactful learning experiences came from a pre-conference workshop attended by members of the Asia Pacific Hospice Network (APHN). The workshop focused on integrating palliative care into Intensive Care Units (ICUs), a topic that resonates deeply with me. The discussions highlighted various models of integrating palliative care in critical care settings, drawing insights from speakers from countries such as USA, India, Taiwan, Korea, and Nepal.

**Inspirational Talks by Key Speakers:** Several talks at the conference stood out, particularly for their focus on community-based palliative care and its integration into Universal Health Coverage (UHC):

- Dr. Ying Wei Wang from Taiwan delivered an inspiring talk on Transforming Palliative Care in the Community – Compassion and Healing. His insights on the compassionate and holistic approach in community-based palliative care were moving and highlighted the power of empathy in medical practice.
- Dr. Dan Munday's session on Primary Palliative Care: The Long Road to Universal Health Care emphasized the importance of integrating palliative care into primary care services to achieve comprehensive UHC. As someone who has been part of the Primary Palliative Care Special Interest Group (PrimPalCare SIG), it was particularly encouraging to see the emphasis on this subject.

- Dr. Arif Kamal presented on Improving Palliative Care Quality and Outcomes through IT, discussing how technology can help streamline care, manage symptoms more effectively, and provide better outcomes for patients receiving palliative care.

While there were other key topics such as spiritual care, pediatric palliative care, nursing education, and symptom management, the sessions I attended provided critical insights on how to improve palliative care in my home country. However, I intend to focus on areas of my interest as I return to my clinical practice and advocacy.

### **Networking and Collaboration: Meeting the Primary Palliative Care SIG Members in Person**

Since 2021, I've been attending quarterly meetings of the Primary Palliative Care Special Interest Group (PrimPalCare SIG) via Zoom, where professionals from across the Asia Pacific gather to discuss the integration of palliative care into primary healthcare systems. The conference gave me the opportunity to meet fellow members face-to-face for the first time, including: Dr. Daniel Munday (Nepal), Chamath Fernando (Sri Lanka), Ping Jen (Taiwan), Maria Witjaksono (Indonesia), Tah Nern Cheng (Singapore) and other APHN members encourage to join. The forum is an eye opener that many are interested to join the SiG group.

Each member shared their country's unique challenges and struggles in integrating palliative care into primary care. Despite the diversity in stages of implementation, it was evident that everyone shared a common goal of providing palliative care in a culturally relevant and sustainable manner. These interactions reinforced the importance of international collaboration in advancing palliative care.

### **A Personal Connection: Rosalie Shaw**

One of the most emotional moments for me during the conference was reconnecting with Dr. Rosalie Shaw, the key person who encouraged me to pursue the scholarship at Help the Hospices and to take up a Postgraduate Diploma in Palliative Care. When she saw me, she said, "How are you? I know you suffered long enough," and then held my hand. Her words triggered a wave of emotions, reminding me of the early struggles I faced when palliative care was just beginning in the Philippines in the early 2000. Back then, only a few advocates fought for the recognition of palliative care as a specialty. The fellowship training in palliative care started in 2002, and overcoming skepticism from other specialists who saw it as care only for the dying was a significant challenge.

Rosalie was surprised and delighted to learn that I was the recipient of the scholarship named after her. Our reconnection was one of the highlights of the conference and a reminder of the long journey I've traveled in this field.

## **The APHC Experience: Success and Future Directions**

Overall, the 2023 APHC conference was a success. It brought together professionals from different countries, uniting them in a shared mission to improve palliative care delivery and education. The research presentations and poster sessions showcased innovative programs and cutting-edge developments, providing inspiration for future projects.

In particular, I had the pleasure of co-chairing a simultaneous session, where we had lively discussions during the break. The collaborative spirit fostered at APHC will undoubtedly help drive palliative care forward across Asia and the Pacific region.

### **Conclusion**

Attending APHC 2023 has left a lasting impact on me, both professionally and personally. The knowledge and inspiration I've gained, especially around integrating palliative care in ICU units and promoting primary palliative care, will guide my efforts in improving palliative care services in my home country. Meeting experts and reconnecting with old friends like Dr. Rosalie Shaw was incredibly fulfilling. As I return to my work, I am more motivated than ever to advocate for and enhance palliative care in the Philippines.