

UEGF PRESS RELEASE

East meets West: from Kuala Lumpur to Barcelona for shared knowledge and experiences

(Vienna, 5 October 2010) The United European Gastroenterology Federation (UEGF) is delighted to announce the success of the inaugural “East meets West” symposium, held in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday 21 September 2010, and looks forward to welcoming the Asian Pacific Digestive Foundation (APDF) to a complementary symposium at the 18th United European Gastroenterology Week (UEGW) meeting in Barcelona (23–27 October 2010). The meeting in Kuala Lumpur focussed on the pathophysiology and prevention of stomach cancer; the Barcelona meeting will address minimally invasive endoscopic and surgical techniques to achieve maximum safety and patient comfort.

According to UEGF expert, Prof. Anthony Axon (Leeds, UK), there was a true meeting of minds at the Kuala Lumpur symposium, where experts from across the globe shared their knowledge of stomach cancer. “Stomach cancer is the second most common cause of death from cancer worldwide,” he explains. “Its cause is well understood and, through ongoing research and clinical collaborations such as those initiated in Kuala Lumpur, it should be entirely possible to prevent it.”

Stomach cancer: *H pylori* in the spotlight

Stomach cancer occurs in people who have a longstanding, severe stomach inflammation. The inflammation itself rarely gives rise to symptoms and those who do develop cancer are not usually aware of it until it is inoperable. “Sadly, this means that around 85% of patients presenting with stomach cancer die from it,” says Prof. Axon.

The stomach inflammation associated with cancer is caused by an infection with *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacterium that infects the stomach in early childhood. Almost 50% of the world’s population has this infection, making it one of the most prevalent chronic infections of mankind. “Fortunately,” says Prof. Axon, “only a minority of infected individuals develop the severe and extensive inflammation that is required to cause cancer.”

“As we discussed in Kuala Lumpur, the degree of inflammation in any particular case depends on the virulence of the infecting strain of *H pylori*, the genetic characteristics of the infected individual, and environmental factors such as diet and material wealth,” he explains. “Since *H pylori* can be treated by a combination of antibiotics, in theory, the disease could be prevented.”

Minimally invasive techniques: state of the art

The UEGW meeting in Barcelona will be the venue for a complementary “East meets West” symposium addressing issues surrounding minimally invasive surgical techniques. The symposium will be co-chaired by Dr. Nageshwar Reddy from Hyderabad in India and Prof. Jacques Devière from Brussels in Belgium, with subjects under discussion including Natural Orifice Translumenal Surgery (NOTES) (Nageshwar Reddy, Hyderabad), minimal access surgery (Abe Fingerhut, Poissy), endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD), endoscopic mucosal resection (EMR) and ablation (Horst Neuhaus, Düsseldorf) and endoscopic and surgical integration (Haru Inoue, Yokohama). A panel discussion will follow the formal presentations.

“The East meets West initiative was set up jointly by the UEGF Scientific Committee and the APDF in order to stimulate joint activities and share medical knowledge in gastroenterology across the globe”, say Prof. Axon and Professor John Atherton (Chair UEGF Scientific Committee). “We are all delighted with the way the joint initiative has worked this year and we look forward to a long and productive partnership between our Asian and European colleagues.”

The East meets West symposium, “Minimally invasive techniques” will be held in the Auditorium at the UEGW meeting in Barcelona on Wednesday 27 October 2010 at 8.30-10.30 am.

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