

South-East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (SEAFOMP) – Celebrating 20th Anniversary of formation

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Abstract— The South-East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (SEAFOMP), which was established in 2000, stemmed from a vision to galvanize efforts in promoting and developing the medical physics profession in the ASEAN region. The South East Asia Congress of Medical Physics (SEACOMP) – its largest annual scientific meeting, and in recent years, the ASEAN College of Medical Physics (ACOMP) had been the catalyst for the growth and progress of medical physics in this region. In this paper, we present brief reports of the progress achieved and challenges faced by its member countries. The Iloilo Declaration acknowledged and affirmed the efforts of SEAFOMP members towards education and training of medical physics, laying out the strategies and focus of the federation in charting the way forward for the federation and its member countries.

Keywords— SEACOMP. Medical physics, education, profession, ASEAN

I. INTRODUCTION

South-East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (SEAFOMP) started in the year 2000. This year, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the federation. This article intend to summarize the progress and achievement of the medical physics professions of the south east Asian region, to commemorate this important milestone. Fig.1 shows the logo of the 20th anniversary of SEAFOMP.

II. THE BEGINNING OF SEAFOMP

SEAFOMP was formed in an informal discussion in 1996 during the International Organization of Medical

Physics (IOMP) World Congress at Nice, France. The founding members were Anchali Krisanachinda, Kwan-Hoong Ng, Agnette Peralta, Ratana Pirabul, Djarwani S. Soejoko, and Toh-Jui Wong (Fig.2 and Fig.3). It was only in 2000, four years later, that the federation was officially accepted as a regional chapter of the International Organization of Medical Physics (IOMP) at the Chicago World Congress [1]. SEAFOMP started with five (out of 10) member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei and Vietnam joined in 2002 and 2005, respectively[1, 2]. Professor Dr. Kwan-Hong Ng served as the founding president. Since then, SEAFOMP has underwent five changeover of executive committees (Table 1).



Fig. 1 SEAFOMP 20th anniversary logo.

The objectives of SEAFOMP are to promote:

- Co-operation and communication between medical physics organizations in South-East Asian region.
- Medical physics and related activities in the region.
- The advancement in status and standard of practice of the medical physics profession.
- To organise and/or sponsor international and regional conferences, meetings or courses.

To collaborate or affiliate with other scientific organizations.

One of the most important event that the federation organised is the South East Asian Congress of Medical Physics (SEACOMP). The event was initially started as a biennial event. However, it has proven to be an important activity that is crucial in promoting every aspect of the federation objectives that it has since been organized almost every year, rotating amongst the member countries. Table 2 shows the list of SEACOMPs organised over the last 20 years. In the last few years, SEAFOMP have also been co-organising the SEACOMP and Asia-Oceania Congress of Medical Physics (AOCMP) with the Asia-Oceania Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (AFOMP). This synergistic combination has been shown to be extremely useful towards enhancing interactions, facilitating knowledge and cultural exchange in the medical physics community within the larger region of Asia and beyond. The number of delegates has grown from just over 100 to more than 600. In 2020, the 18th SEACOMP & 20th AOCMP is expected to be held in Phuket, Thailand on October 8-10, 2020 with the theme “Medical Physics-Achievements, Challenges and Horizons”.



Fig. 1: SEAFOMP founding members posing with a plenary speaker (4th from the left). From left: Anchali Krisanachinda (Thailand), Agnette Peralta (Philippines), Djarwani S. Soejoko (Indonesia). From the right: Toh-Jui Wong (Singapore), Kwan-Hoong Ng (Malaysia) and Ratana Pirabul (Thailand).



Fig. 2 AFOMP and SEAFOMP founders in 2001 Bangkok, Thailand.

Table 1 The executive committees of SEAFOMP

	President	Vice President	Secretary General	Treasurer
2000-2006	Dr. Kwan Hoong Ng	Dr Anchali Krisanachinda	Ms Agnette Peralta	Mr Toh Jui Wong
2007-2009	Dr. Anchali Krisanachida	Ms Agnette Peralta	Dr James Lee	Dr Rachmat Widodo Adi
2010-2012	Ms Agnette Peralta	Dr.James Lee	Dr.Freddy Haryanto	Ms.Sivalee Suriyapee
2013-2018	Dr James Lee	Dr.Freddy Haryanto	Dr. Supriyanto Pawiro	Ms.Sivalee Suriyapee
2019 – present	Dr Freddy Haryanto	Dr. Chai Hong Yeong	Dr.Supriyanto Pawiro	Dr.Taweap Sanghangthum

I. BIRTH OF ACOMP

The strong cohesion developed between the member countries had led to the birth of another commission, the ASEAN College of Medical Physics (ACOMP) in 2014 during the 12th SEACOMP held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam [3]. Professor Ng Kwan Hoong was elected the first chairman of the college. The vision is to make the ACOMP the premier education and training centre for medical physics in ASEAN and beyond. It envision to model itself in the likes of American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) and European Federation of Organisations For Medical Physics (EFOMP) summer schools.

The ACOMP objectives were to

- enhance the standard and quality of education and training of medical physicists,
- provide continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, and
- promote the continuing competence of practitioners of medical physics.

Table 1 History of SEACOMPs [1]

Date	SEACOMP	Venue	Congress Theme	No. Of delegates
23-24 April 2001	1 st SEACOMP	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Continuous Quality Improvement In Medical Imaging And Radiation Therapy	110
12-14 November 2003	2 nd SEACOMP	Bangkok, Thailand	Enhancing Quality In Imaging And Therapy In South-East Asia	150
27-29 September 2004	3 rd SEACOMP & 4 th AOCMP.	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Progress And Innovations In Medical Physics	220
7-11 November 2006	4 th SEACOMP	Jakarta, Indonesia	Physics Contribution To Human And Biosystem	126
21-23 November 2007	5 th SEACOMP	Manila, Philippines	Saving Lives Through Physics And Engineering	124
29-31 October 2008	6 th SEACOMP & 8 th AOCMP	Ho Chi Minh City , Vietnam	Nurturing Collaborations In Medical Physics	305
22-24 October 2009	7 th SEACOMP & 9 th AOCMP	Chiang Mai, Thailand	Update In Medical Physics	303
10-13 December 2010	8 th SEACOMP	Bandung, Indonesia	Improvement In Medical Science And Technology For Better Life	131
16-19 November 2011	9 th SEACOMP	Manila & Bohol, Philippines	Celebrating Gains And Meeting New Challenges In Medical Physics	115
11-14 December 2012	10 th SEACOMP & 12 th AOCMP	Chiang Mai, Thailand	The Convergence Of Imaging And Therapy	202
12-14 December 2013	11 th SEACOMP & 13 th AOCMP	Singapore	Advancing Imaging And Radiotherapy With Medical Physics	271
23-25 October 2014	12 th SEACOMP & 14 th AOCMP	Ho Chi Minh City , Vietnam	Medical Physics For Advanced Medicine	239
10-12 December 2015	13 th SEACOMP	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Improving The Quality Of Human Health Through Physics	196
9-12 December 2016	14 th SEACOMP, 16 th AOCMP & 22 nd ICMP	Bangkok, Thailand	Medical Physics Propelling Global Health	645
1-3 December 2017	15 th SEACOMP	Ilo-Ilo, Philippines	Medical Physics Towards Health For ALL	177
11-14 November 2018	16 th SEACOMP & 18 th AOCMP	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	A Sustainable Future For Medical Physics	529
8-10 August 2019	17 th SEACOMP & 3 rd PIT-FMB	Bali, Indonesia	Improvement On Patient Care And Safety Through The Innovation In Medical Physics	320

Since the inception of the ACOMP, the college has been active in organising various workshops around the regions, enhancing education and training of medical physics. In 2015, the first ACOMP workshop was ommissionio in Malaysia. Since then, ACOMP has organised at least nine ACOMP workshops, hosted by various regional medical physics societies, universities and hospitals. The workshops organised by the college often emphasized on hands-on, practical sessions. Hence, the number of participants are often of smaller numbers, ranging from 20 to 214, in contrast to SEACOMPs. They were often focused on a specific topic and specialties.

The following were some of the proposed and carried out ACOMP workshops:

- AAPM/IOMP/ISEP Imaging Physics Workshop
- Workshop on Digital Radiography
- Interventional Radiology: Safety, Optimization, Dosimetry and Quality Control
- Workshop on Digital Radiography
- School on Monte Carlo simulation
- Workshop on Radiation Dosimetry – Solid State and OSL Dosimetry: Physics & Applications
- School on radiation emergency and disaster management

- School on non-ionizing radiation protection
- Regional inter-comparison in radiation dosimetry
- Workshop on Patient Dose Management and Monitoring in Diagnostic Radiology

II. IMPORTANT COUNTRY MILESTONES

A. Cambodia

In Cambodia, the history of medical physics is relatively new and currently there are only four medical physicists who work in two radiotherapy departments. SEACOMP member countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Philippines have played very important roles in the building of human resource capacity in Cambodia, particularly in medical physics education, as there is no medical physics programme in the country. Two medical physicists successfully graduated from the Master of Medical Physics programme in University of Malaya, Malaysia in 2015 an 2018, respectively [4]. For clinical training in medical physics, currently there is one medical physicist who is attending the IAEA-Advanced Medical Physics Learning Environment (AMPLE) programme and is

planning to join the new batch of radiation oncology medical physics (ROMP) programme in Thailand, starting October 2020.

To summarise, the SEACOMP has a huge contribution to the development of medical physics of member states. Certainly, the spirit of growing together for a better medical physics and healthcare system in ASEAN rings true.

B. *Indonesia*

Currently, the country has six universities offering master programmes in physics, with major in medical physics and two universities offering PhD programmes in physics, majoring in medical physics related research [2]. The medical physics profession has been recognised by the Indonesian government, in particular, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Man Power and Nuclear Regulatory Agency [5] [6].

We have also started the registration for medical physicists in 2012 and continued with licensing for clinical medical physicists by the Indonesian Health Professional Board – Ministry of Health. In 2020, it has transformed to be the Indonesian Health Professional Council (Konsil Tenaga Kesehatan Indonesia, KTKI) [2].

The medical physics community had also been active in education and continuous professional development. Collectively, we had organised three schools in collaboration with the AAPM, International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

From 2016 to 2020, we had established clinical qualified medical physicist residency programme in radiotherapy, diagnostic radiology, and nuclear medicine. In addition, an associate medical physicist training programme was also established to cater for the national demand of medical physicist in 2016.

C. *Lao PDR*

Lao P.D.R, with a population of 7 million is ranked as one of the Least Developed Developing Countries (LDDC) in South East Asian region by the United Nations. Currently, two medical physicists had graduated with Master of Science in Medical Physics/Medical Imaging from the Chulalongkorn University in 2017 under IAEA fellowships. One medical physicist has been attending IAEA-AMPLE clinical training in ROMP since the last 2 years (2018-2020), supported by VAMED Company. The facility consists of the first linear accelerator system at Radiotherapy Center, Mittaphab Hospital, Ministry of Health. Their responsibilities are to run a quality assurance (QA) programme, which includes mechanical and radiation dosimetry. Medical physicist also involves in treatment planning of patients and patient verification QA. The medical physicists are also responsible for radiation protection and radiation safety in the hospital. They also lecture on basic radiation physics, quality assurance and

quality control of radiation modalities in medical fields to technologist student and resident of the Radiology Department, University of Health Science. In terms of research, they are also involved in supervision of postgraduate students in nuclear physics, University of Laos for research related to radiation. We are still facing many obstacles such as the lack of experienced medical physicist, clinical practice; budget and fundings. The most difficult part is working without clinical supervisors.

D. *Malaysia*

Malaysia has about 349 medical physicists in the country [6]. Currently, the country has two master programme for the education and training of medical physicists at University of Malaya and Universiti Sains Malaysia [4, 7]. The master programme at the University of Malaya is Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM) accredited, and had been omission as a regional training centre for postgraduate medical physics by the IAEA, contributing to the development of medical physics profession in Cambodia, Vietnam and Brunei. Malaysia currently has two medical physics professional organizations, i.e. Medical Physics Division (MPD), under the umbrella of Institute of Physics Malaysia (IFM) and Malaysia Association of Medical Physics (MAMP). They have organized several regional conferences, workshops and seminars under the umbrella of SEAFOMP and ACOMP. In 2015, the MPD organized a joint workshop with AAPM/ ISEP and IOMP on the theme of imaging physics and has attracted more than 200 participants from the region. In addition, Malaysia has also hosted three hands-on workshop under the ACOMP.

In 2016, the Allied Health Professions Act (Act 774) was gazetted. Medical physicist along with 22 other allied health professions are included under this Act whereby all the practicing professionals must obtain a omission certificate and compulsory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of 30 points per year.

Malaysia's strength lies in having well established postgraduate programmes while their weakness is that they have yet to establish national certification for competent medical physicists. There is currently no medical physics residency programme in Malaysia, hence most of the medical physicists are trained via on-the-job, non-structured trainings. However, under the IAEA RAS6038 programme, Malaysia has completed the residential trainings for 6 ROMPs and 2 DRMPs. The latest cohort of the ROMP, DRMP and NMMP residential training was started in 2018 and expected to complete in 2021. The continuing challenges faced by the medical physics community in the country is outward migration of experienced medical physicists and sustainable research funding.

E. *Myanmar*

The first medical physicist from Myanmar was trained in England and later assigned to work in the Radiation

Therapy Department of Yangon General Hospital in 1958. In the beginning, a limited number of medical physicists, who were opportuned to take long term training (more than 1 year), were allocated in Mandalay and Taunggyi General Hospital. Since then, medical physicist trainings have been accomplished via local apprenticeship training and some short course training programmes supported by the IAEA and World Health Organization (WHO). The candidates for the training programmes were from academic level or senior technologist who graduated from physics or equivalent subject. Our challenges is that we do not have a proper academic education and training programme at the national level.

The undergraduate degree course for medical imaging technology was established by the Ministry of Health in 1991 at Yangon. Currently, there are three universities which offer undergraduate degrees in medical imaging technology and two universities which offers master degrees in that field.

Radiation therapy technologist undergraduate course was introduced in 2018 at the University of Medical Technology, Yangon. The first 2-year master of medical physics programme is expected to be established in 2021 at the same university.

The Association of Myanmar Medical Physicists (MMPA) was setup in the 2016 with 30 members who were working as medical physicists and radiation protection officers. MMPA joined IOMP, AFOMP and SEAFOMP at the end of 2016.

F. Philippines

During the past 20 years, giant strides have been made in the development of medical physics in the Philippines. The first Certifying Board Examination in Radiation Oncology Medical Physics was held in February 2010. There are now 19 certified ROMPs. The first Certifying Board Examination in Diagnostic Radiology Medical Physics was held in July 2019. There are now 13 certified Diagnostic Radiology Medical Physicists (DRMPs).

Sixty-one health facilities now employ medical physicists, 19 of which employ three medical physicists each. The two national radiation regulatory agencies continue to employ medical physicists. Three companies now employ medical physicists; they provide medical physics consulting and testing services. Five universities employ medical physicists as faculty members. Eight multinational companies employ Filipino medical physicists.

University of Santo Tomas, the only school offering the master's degree in medical physics, produced a total of 145 graduates from 2000 to 2019. The ROMP clinical residency programme started in 2009; that of DRMP in 2010; and that of Nuclear Medicine Medical Physics (NMMP) in 2018.

The Philippine Organization of Medical Physicists established in 1986 is now the Society of Medical Physicists

in the Republic of the Philippines, created in 2016. It has hosted three SEACOMPs.

G. Singapore

Singapore's demand for medical physicists continues to grow with our expanding healthcare such as the new proton beam therapy at the National Cancer Centre and increasing diagnostic radiology and nuclear medicine capabilities. We have about 50 medical physicists in the Society of Medical Physicists (Singapore), formed in 1998. We currently have two universities offering Medical Physics minor or concentration at the bachelor's level and a PhD programme in one of the university. We have implemented residency programmes for nuclear medicine and radiotherapy using the IAEA residency syllabus. At least one of the public healthcare cluster has ommission the residency's competency framework as part of the career path of a medical physicist. We also continue to host important regional conferences such as the AOCMP-SEACOMP in 2013 and the upcoming World Congress on Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering in 2021. We continue to work actively with the IAEA to offer training fellowships, conduct regional training workshops and planning meetings for various projects.

H. Thailand

The first medical physicist, Mrs. Pradub Atthakorn was trained in England and later worked in the Radiotherapy Department at Siriraj Hospital in the 1960s. Medical physics education was started in 1972 at Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University. Followed by Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University in 1990. Medical Physics Club of Thailand was started in 1978. The 3rd medical physics programme was established at Chiang Mai University in 2001. The M.Sc. programme in Medical Imaging/Medical Physics was started at the Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University in 2002. The 5th medical physics programme was established at Naresuan University in collaboration with Chulabhorn Hospital and the 6th medical physics programme was started at HRH Princess Chulabhorn College of Medical Science, Chulabhorn Royal Academy in 2018. Doctoral programme in medical physics was established at Chulalongkorn University in 2016. IAEA clinical training of medical physicist, 2-year programme, in radiation oncology (ROMP) was piloted in Thailand in 2005 with the cooperation of Thai Medical Physicist Society (TMPS) established in 2000, and the support on the resources by the IAEA. IAEA training guides, template for self-assessment, six monthly report, external visit by IAEA experts are obtained under the Regional Cooperative Agreement (RCA) for Asian Region. DRMP started in 2009 and NMMP started in 2010. In 2016 IAEA-AMPLE was piloted in Thailand. Residents from Myanmar, Vietnam Laos and Nepal participated clinical training with Thai clinical supervisors in ROMP and NMMP. In 2019, Ministry of Public Health approved the Medical Physicist

licence. All six master programmes are 2-year programme of didactic lecture, laboratory, on-the-job training and research. The success of the first pilot on ROMP, NMMP serves the needs at major university hospitals and the cancer centers in Thailand and neighbor countries. DRMP serves the need in university hospitals and major private hospitals with international accreditation (JCI). The certification and accreditation are in progress. TMPS members are 200 in 2020.

I. Vietnam

Vietnam has about 150 medical physicists in the country. Currently, the medical physicists trained at the Bachelor's degree. Vietnam has yet to have a master training programme. All medical physicists were received on-the-job trainings at dedicate hospitals for at least six months focusing on nuclear medicine or radiotherapy under the supervision of senior medical physicists before they start work.

Several universities have a training programmes for medical physics in the whole country at big cities such as Hanoi, Hue, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City.

One of the main issues in Vietnam is to maintain qualified medical physicist resources in order to sustain development in radiation medicine. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education and Training has approved the first official syllabus in medical physics and ommission the Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU) to conduct this pilot programme. NTTU has developed this Bachelor programme in compliance with the IAEA TCS 56 Postgraduate medical physics academic programmes under framework of IAEA TC project VIE 6030 "Development of education and training programmes for medical physics". At this moment about 80 new medical physics students are currently enrolled. In parallel, The University of Malaya has supported the train the trainer programme. Two young medical physicists have graduated with Master of Medical Physics degree. The master programme is IPeM accredited. One of them has since continued with PhD study in medical physics.

To guarantee working position of medical physicists in hospitals, the government is going to consider the medical physicist resource as one of the prerequisite conditions for licensing.

III. THE SEAFOMP ILOILO DECLARATION

On the occasion of the 15th South East Asian Congress of Medical Physics held in Iloilo City, the Philippines on 1- 3 Dec 2017, the 'Declaration on SEAFOMP Moving Forward' was unveiled and endorsed by all those present. It is a historical landmark for SEAFOMP.

The South East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (SEAFOMP) DECLARATION ON

SEAFOMP MOVING FORWARD hereinafter called the ILOILO DECLARATION

We, the representatives of the member societies and the officers of the South East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics, on the occasion of the 15th South East Asian Congress of Medical Physics held in Iloilo City, the Philippines on 1- 3 December 2017;

CONSIDERING the strong friendship among South East Asian countries as it celebrates in the Philippines this year the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Association of South East Asian Nations;

AFFIRMING the importance of cooperation in ensuring success and solidarity in any endeavour;

ACKNOWLEDGING the extremely important role of medical physicists in the delivery of quality and safe health care services and in radiation protection, especially in such fields as diagnostic radiology medical physics, nuclear medicine medical physics and radiation oncology medical physics;

RECOGNIZING the importance of education and training in ensuring the availability of qualified medical physicists; and

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the current situation of a lack of qualified medical physicists and of the non-existence of appropriate positions for medical physicists in some ASEAN countries;

Do hereby agree to:

1. Promote cooperation in the development and implementation of capacity-building programmes and sharing of best practices in critical areas of concern such as radiation dosimetry, quality assurance, radiation protection, risk management, and professional skills enhancement;
2. Raise the professional standards and competency of medical physicists in the region through quality-driven, knowledge-based and value-enriched education; and
3. Strengthen the leadership qualities among members through role models, mentoring and empowerment.

Done in Iloilo City, Republic of the Philippines, on the second day of December in the Year Two Thousand and Seventeen, in a single original copy in the English Language.

IV. LOOKING FORWARD

The spirit of ASEAN is resounded in SEAFOMP. The idea of setting up an organization for South-east Asian medical physics societies was first mooted in 1996. The South East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (SEAFOMP) was officially accepted as a regional chapter of the IOMP at the Chicago World Congress in 2000 with five member countries, viz. Indonesia, Malaysia,

Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Today we have nine members. Looking forward to the future, all members of SEAFOMP will continue to strive for continual promotion of the Medical Physics profession by working with world bodies like IAEA and IOMP. We would need to continuously enhance our education and professional development. To sustain this growth, it is essential to develop new generation of younger leaders, who are passionate and progressive in this field.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMPLE: Advanced Medical Physics Learning Environment
 ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
 DRMP: Diagnostic Radiology Medical Physics
 NMMP: Nuclear Medicine Medical Physics
 ROMP: Radiation Oncology Medical Physics
 SEACOMP: South East Asian Congress of Medical Physics

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