

# The Perinatal Society of Singapore

Dr Mary Daniel  
President, The Perinatal Society of Singapore

**T**he Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Singapore and the Singapore Paediatric Society organised the First Asia-Oceania Congress of Perinatology from 25 to 28 November 1979 in Singapore. The congress was jointly chaired by Professors SS Ratnam and Wong Hock Boon and the Patron of the Congress was President BH Sheares. Following this Congress, which drew specialists from all parts of the world, the Federation of Asia-Oceania Perinatal societies was established in 1980, with its secretariat in Australia. These events, gave perinatology in Asia and Singapore a higher profile.

Professors SS Ratnam, Wong Hock Boon, RL Tambyraja, Ho Nai Kiong and numerous other obstetricians and neonatologists were greatly involved in the initial efforts to set up the perinatal society. A pro tem committee chaired by Dr KK Chow was set up in 1987. It was decided that Membership of the Perinatal Society would not be confined to the physicians but open to anybody interested in the mother and child. The inaugural meeting was held on 13 August 1987 at KKH Lecture Theatre, during which Associate Professor Ho Nai Kiong was elected as the first president. Professors SS Ratnam and Wong Hock Boon were honoured as the Patrons of the Perinatal Society of Singapore, which was registered in 1989 and inaugurated on 11 March 1989.

The aims of the Perinatal Society of Singapore, as laid down in the constitution, were:

1. To promote the health and welfare of the fetus and newborn;
2. To promote better rapport between different disciplines in the field of perinatal healthcare;
3. To undertake continuing education in perinatal care at levels of medical practice by means of conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.;
4. To identify areas of deficiency within our perinatal care set-up so as to concentrate efforts to improve future strategies;
5. To standardize perinatal data collection and documentation;
6. To encourage research in the field of perinatal medicine;
7. To establish a close working relationship with government and non-government agencies involved in activities and programmes for perinatal healthcare; and
8. To disseminate information on the objectives and methods of perinatal care to health professions and the general public.

From the start, the society focused on community service and health education. The assistance of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological and the Paediatric Societies, and the support of the Academy of Medicine, Ministry of Health and National University of Singapore were important factors in the establishment and running of the Society in the early years. The subscription rate was kept low to encourage people from all walks of life to join and benefit from the society. It drew its members from doctors, nurses, paramedicals and the public.



The first activity of the newly-formed society was a medical forum on “Ethical Issues of Management of Very Low Birth Infants” held at the Hotel Meridien on 1 July 1989 for doctors and paramedical staff. This was jointly organized with the Paediatric Society and the Combined Neonatal Units. This was soon followed by the first public lecture on “The Prevention of Prematurity” on 28 October 1989, co-organized with Thomson Medical Centre. The first newsletter of the society rolled off the press in October as well. A Scientific Meeting, co-organized with the Chapter of Paediatricians, O&G and Paediatric Societies, was held on 20–21 January 1990. The society held its own first scientific meeting on 20–21 October 1990 on “Recent Advances in Feto-maternal and Neonatal Care”.

Affiliation with the Federation of Asia-Oceania Perinatal Societies (FAOPS) followed soon afterwards. The 2<sup>nd</sup> executive committee sent a large contingent, headed by A/Professor Ho Nai Kiong, to the 6<sup>th</sup> FAOPS congress in Perth in Oct 1990. They successfully bid to hold the congress in Singapore in 1996.

The subsequent activities of the societies included:

1. Public forums by local and foreign specialists — there have been an average of two to three forums every year.
2. Ultrasound Workshops (Obstetric) — these have been held in conjunction with the Scientific Meetings.
3. Scientific Meetings — the society has organized a biannual meeting from 1990; the last meeting was held in September 2002.
4. Joint Scientific Meetings / Lectures with the Chapters of Paediatrics, and Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Academy of Medicine, Singapore Paediatric Society.
5. Scientific Talks and Round Table Discussions by visiting specialists — these have either been organized by the society or by commercial companies (with the society’s sponsorship).

The society publishes a newsletter with articles for both professionals and public. It is distributed to its members as well as to the public at the public forums. The first lecture on infant massage, followed by a practical and hands-on demonstration, took place as part of a public forum in 1998. Due to the great interest generated by the session, it was repeated at the next forum and has now become a regular activity of the society. It has been conducted both in English and in Mandarin. The first “Teach the Trainers” workshop was held in October 1999 and has been repeated several times since then.

In 1991, the society was accepted as a corporate member of the People’s Association and officially linked with Cheng San community centre. A Befriender’s scheme was started in 1998. Diethelm Healthcare and Nestlé were



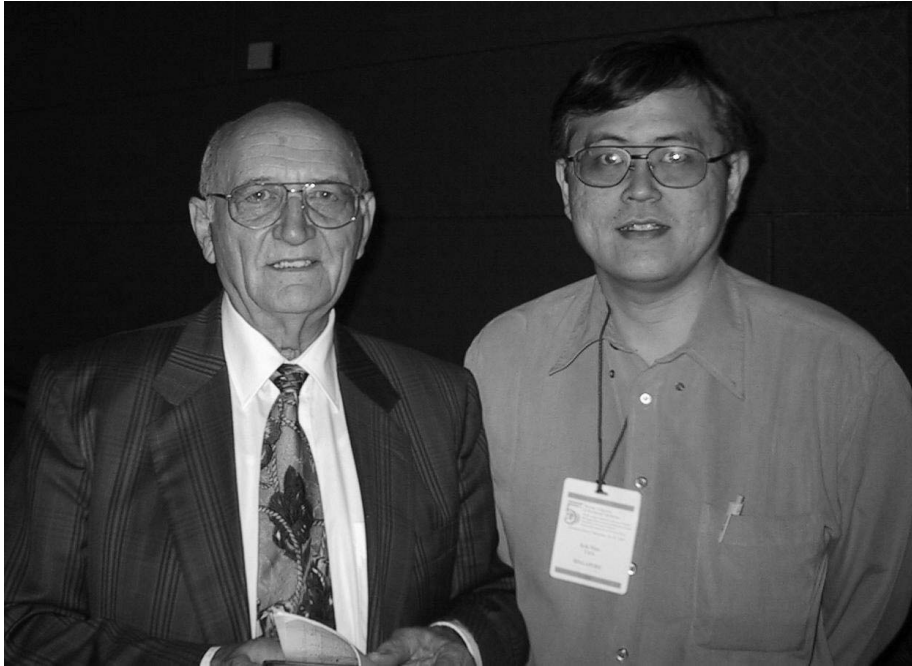
Prof SS Ratnam, Senior Professor and Chairman of the Dept of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, National University Hospital. On 11 March 1989, Prof Ratnam addressed the meeting, tracing the origin and purpose of the Society. He later proceeded to inaugurate the Society with the symbolic strike of a gong.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM of the Perinatal Society of Singapore was held on 24 Feb 1990 at the Meridien Hotel.

#### **EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS FOR 1990/1991**

President	Prof RL Tambyraja
Vice President	Dr NK Ho
Secretary-General	Dr KK Chow
Deputy Secretary-General	Dr HL Loke
Treasurer	Dr P Liauw
Publication Chairman	Dr SB Lim
Members	Mdm Ler Ai Choo Mrs Audrey Liow Miss Janet C Judge Mrs Elsie Kwek Mr Wong Say Chek Prof C Chen



Dr Kelvin Tan, Vice President, Perinatal Society of Singapore with Prof Erich Z Saling, a pioneer of Perinatal Medicine at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Perinatal Medicine of the World Association of Perinatal Medicine in Barcelona, 23–27 September 2001. Prof Saling, a Berlin Professor of Obstetrics initiated the field of perinatal medicine. In 1960 he performed the first ever fetal scalp blood analysis, and opened the door for investigations in this field of medicine.

recognised as “Friends of the Perinatal Society of Singapore” in recognition of their contributions and efforts.

The highlight of the society’s activities was the hosting of the 9<sup>th</sup> FAOPS congress, held from 10 to 14 November 1996, with the theme “Relevance and Excellence in Perinatal Care”. It attracted 750 participants from 36 countries. Professor RL Tambyraja and Associate Professor Ho Nai Kiong were co-chairmen of the Organizing Committee. The scientific proceedings of this meeting were also published. At the congress, the society also launched a book entitled “Healthy Baby, Happy Mummy”. This was a compilation of lectures from the past public forums. In keeping with the times, the society developed its website (<http://home.pacific.net.sg/~pns>) in 1996.

In support of nursing education, the society sponsored a silver medal as a prize award for the Neonatal Critical care nursing course in 1996 and 1997. Travel grants were introduced in 1999 which allowed the society to sponsor members to FAOPS in Manila in 2000 and Chirstchurch in 2002.

The former presidents were also involved in perinatal organizations outside of Singapore. Professor RL Tambyraja\* had served as president of FAOPS and Associate Professor Ho Nai Kiong served in the FAOPS council. Both of them also represented the society at the World Congress in Perinatal Medicine in Rome in 1993 (or 1994) and became foundation members of the World Federation of Perinatal Medicine in 1993.

Infant massage has become a significant activity since 1999, with several sessions conducted in community centres each year and training sessions held for trainers. In 2001, a constitutional change was made to allow the President and Treasurer the option of running for an additional term of office. This would benefit the long-term planning of the activities of the committee. A second constitutional change obtained was to ensure that office bearers of the committee had completed at least one year of membership before taking office.

The society recently organised its Biennial Scientific Meeting on 27-29 September 2002 entitled “Perinatal Horizons for the New Century”. The speakers included Dr Brian Trudinger, one of the pioneers of Doppler ultrasound and Dr Thomas F Baskett, author of the RCOG historical book on “On the Shoulders of Giants: Eponyms and Names in Obstetrics and Gynaecology”. The society has had an exciting period in its brief 13-year history. To date, the society has organized more than 30 public forums and more than 15 scientific meetings. It will continually re-evaluate its role as it intends to remain relevant and active for many years to come.

\*In the presidential address at the 9<sup>th</sup> FAOPS on 10 November 1996, the President of FAOPS (1996-1998) Professor RL Tambyraja said: “The idea to form the Federation of Asia Oceania Perinatal Societies was conceived when Prof Ratnam and I were invited by Fred Grauaug (then Head of Neonatology of Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth) to a meeting in Perth in 1978. The embryo was developed in Japan in the laboratories of Sakamoto Takeda and Maeda where the constitution was drawn. Nine months later on 25 November 1979, Dr Ho Nai Kiong and I (who were Joint Organizing Secretaries) had the pain and pleasure of delivering the ‘FAOPS’ baby”.

#### **PRESIDENTS OF THE PERINATAL SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE:**

1989/1990	Dr Ho Nai Kiong
1990/1991	Dr RL Tambyraja
1991/1992	Dr Ho Lai Yun
1992/1993	Dr RL Tambyraja
1993/1994	Dr Ho Nai Kiong
1994/1995	Dr Phyllis Liauw
1995/1996	Dr Ho Lai Yun
1996/1997	Dr RL Tambyraja
1997/1998	Dr Lim Sok Bee
1998/1999	Dr Ann Tan
1999/2000	Dr Kelvin Tan Kok Hian
2000/2002	Dr Mary L Daniel