

ESMO Asia Congress 2019: Explores Advances in cancer prevention, treatment and care

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Over 3,500 medical professionals have convened for a three-day scientific and educational congress to drive progress and contribute to shaping the oncology roadmap in the Asia-Pacific region



The ESMO Asia Congress returned for its fifth edition at the Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, on 22nd to 24th Nov 2019, bringing together over 3,500 medical professionals from the entire Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The ESMO Asia Congress, organised by the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO by its acronym), the leading professional organisation for medical oncology, is a three-day event packed with scientific and educational lectures, aimed at responding to the unique challenges faced by the oncology community in Asia. “On one side we will be looking at the latest advancements in cancer research to keep the medical professionals up to date,” said ESMO President Josep Taberero. “On the other side, we are committed to bringing about high-level discussions with key stakeholders and decision-makers on how to ensure access to optimal treatment and care for all cancer patients, wherever they live.”

Results of an ESMO survey on the availability and accessibility of anti-cancer medicines showed profound differences in access to treatment between wealthier nations and developing economies. This is true even in relation to those medicines that are on the World Health Organization (WHO) Essential Medicines List. “Such discrepancies are worrying and signal the need for substantial reforms in health service delivery,” said Taberero.

The broad issue of the growing cancer burden in the Asia-Pacific region was tackled by Dr Elisabete Weiderpass, Director of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a WHO agency. In her keynote lecture, Dr Weiderpass emphasised that prevention is the most cost-effective long-term strategy to control cancer as 30 – 50% of all cancers are preventable.

She also emphasised that the Asia-Pacific region, with more than 60% of the world’s population, bears half of the global cancer burden. Consequently, national policies and programs should be strengthened in the region. Aside from raising awareness, there is also a need to reduce exposure to cancer risk factors and ensure that people are provided with the information and support they need to make healthy choices.

One of the key discussions during ESMO Asia 2019 will be around the development of population-based cancer registries in Asia. With a dedicated lecture presenting the Evaluating Medical Oncology Outcomes (EMOO) in Asia project, the Society recognizes the need for more collaboration and integration to fully understand comparabilities that can help formulate strategies to optimize disease and patient management.