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Myeloma Network raises cancer awareness

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Singapore: Asian Myeloma Network is developing a regional collaboration of medical specialists across Asia to study the rising burden of Multiple Myeloma (MM), a form of bone marrow cancer, which is creeping up on the regions ageing population.

Addressing plans of Asian Myeloma Network, Assistant Professor Chng Wee Joo, senior consultant, Department of Haematology-Oncology, National University Cancer Institute, Singapore, said that while the number of MM cases in Singapore is hovering around 100 each year, and may seem small compared to other top killer cancers, overall there has been a significant increase in MM cases in Singapore in the past decade.

"Singapore doctors are seeing more cases of MM," said Dr Chng. "In my practice alone, the number of cases I see per year has more than doubled in the last ten years. As most patients newly diagnosed with MM are over 65 years old, MM will become a growing burden over time because of the aging population in the region."

Of how the Asian Myeloma Network will benefit the ageing populations of Asia, Dr Chng says, "One of our key objectives is to raise general public and healthcare professional awareness of the MM disease profile, risk factors and symptoms in order to improve diagnosis and allow early and appropriate treatment of patients with the disease."

For healthcare professionals, Dr Chng said that the Asian Myeloma Network will seek to promote regional collaboration among MM experts and frontline healthcare professionals and standardisation of a personalised approach to the treatment of patients in the region. Dr Chng said, "With advances in genetic diagnostics, MM patients can now be categorised into different risk groups based on how aggressive their disease is. Physicians can then make a more informed decision on the most appropriate treatment for each patient, being more confident on its likely success."