

College of Physicians Malaysia Annual Scientific Congress 2024

November 21–23, 2024

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Global Ambassador reflections by: Isaac O. Opole, MBChB, PhD, MACP

I was honored to represent ACP and attend the College of Physicians Malaysia Annual Scientific Congress held in Setia Alam, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The conference was held at the Hospital Al-Sultan Abdullah Universiti Teknologi Mara in Puncak Alam outside of Kuala Lumpur and was attended by multiple dignitaries from countries around the world, including the ASEAN region, India, the United Kingdom, and Bangladesh. ACP was the only U.S. medical specialty organization in attendance.

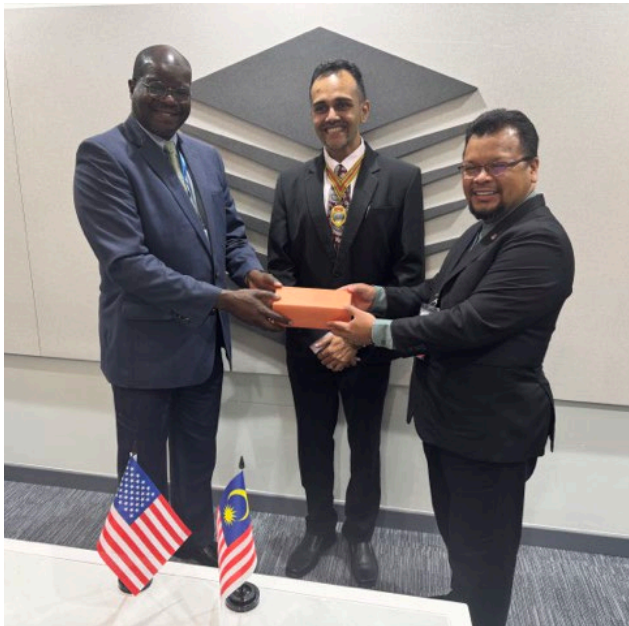
After a very long but otherwise uneventful flight, I landed at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on the morning of November 20. We were accommodated at the Courtyard Marriott in Setia Alam, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, which was conveniently attached to a mall and conference center. I settled in and later enjoyed a very delicious first Malaysian meal: grilled fish, a vegetarian and seafood hot pot, and a sweet fruit/jelly dessert.



Day 2: First day of the conference. The hospital was an impressive new facility built in a region that was seeing significant new development and population growth and previously did not have a major health facility. I met and engaged with several international society dignitaries and was pleased to meet the Governor-elect for the ACP Bangladesh Chapter, Dr. Mujibur Rahman, MBBS, MD, FCPS, FACP, at the meeting. I also briefly joined the ASEAN medical society chairs as they began their regional meeting, which was being held concurrently with this conference.



Our first major engagement was the roundtable discussion led by our host and President of the College of Physicians Malaysia, Dr. Paras Doshi. There were two themes: frailty and its increasing importance in an aging population, and the generalist–specialist divide and professional relationship. It was not only interesting to see the divergence of views on methods and practices from different countries but also to realize that there are a lot of similarities in the patient and physician experience irrespective of geography, with resources being the most significant differentiator. After the roundtable, we attended some of the scientific sessions before being transported back to our hotel for the evening.





Day 3: Our hosts had graciously left an open day with no conference commitments to enable us to see a little bit of Kuala Lumpur. I was fortunate to pair up with Sally Nasution, MD, FACP, Secretary General of the Indonesian Society of Internal Medicine, and Eka Ginanjar, MD, FACP, who invited me to join them for a guided tour of Kuala Lumpur hosted by two friends and family members, Ravi and Hazini. We started with coffee at a quaint little coffee house in the old part of Kuala Lumpur, where I enjoyed a Malaysian-style “Kopi O”—plain coffee with a little sugar, with a tasting of delicious local desserts.





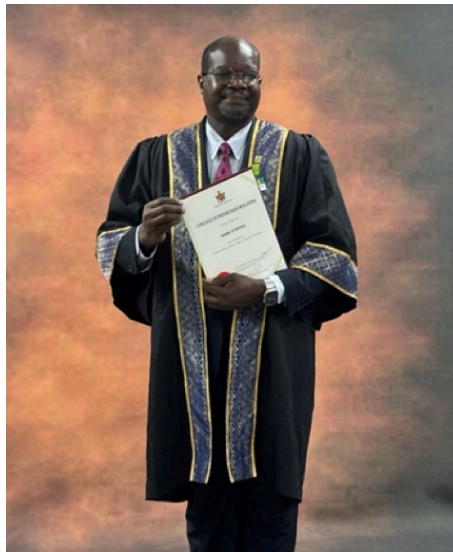
We then toured the city and visited the city market, the Twin Towers, and the KL Tower, which gave a fantastic panoramic view of the city. Our hosts treated us to lunch with a variety of Malaysian cuisine, which was an amazing culinary experience! Back at the hotel, Dr. Doshi and the College of Physicians Malaysia leadership hosted a buffet dinner for the dignitaries and attendees, which was a lot of fun. We socialized, dined, danced to authentic local music, and exchanged gifts before retiring for the evening.

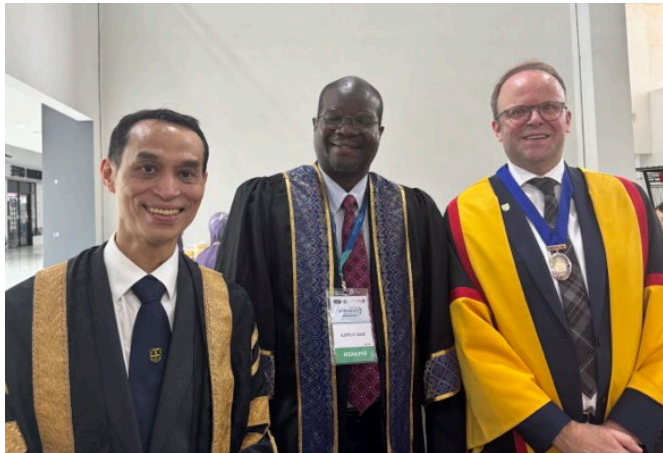


Day 4: Final day of conference and travel day: We had an early start at 7:30 a.m. as usual and found the venue prepared with significant security as the health minister and king (sultan) were both expected to attend. We congregated in the upstairs boardroom for coffee/briefing with the health minister, although I had to leave early for my talk and panel discussion. I also met and briefly chatted with the hospital director. Our panel consisted of the Indonesian Undersecretary for Health, Dato' Sri Norazam Ayob and Professor Andrew Elder, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. I spoke about internal medicine in the United States, while Mr. Ayob spoke financial sustainability for health care in the current economic climate. The contrast with our system was quite apparent as their system is much more centralized and government-run, while ours is quite the opposite.



After our panel session, we joined the other dignitaries and attendees for the officiation ceremony presided over by the regional king, HRH Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah. Professor Dr. Lim Kee Jin gave a keynote speech and, during the awards session, members of the MCP and leaders of international medical organizations present were awarded fellowships of the College of Physicians Malaysia by the king.





After the plenary, we congregated with the other dignitaries and bid the king farewell, got together for group photos, then proceeded to a light lunch. I had great conversations with our colleagues from the Royal College of Physicians of London, Scotland, and Edinburgh, and we resolved to stay in touch and maintain collaborations between our mutual organizations. Thereafter, it was time for me to depart and head to the airport for my flight out of Kuala Lumpur.



Overall, this was a very successful visit. Our hosts were very gracious and professional and ran a very well-organized meeting. I was particularly impressed by Dr. Paras Doshi's leadership and the quality of academic discourse throughout the meeting. As an organization, ACP is very proud of our Fellows who are leading international chapters and organizations, and our close alliance with organizations such as the College of Physicians Malaysia. All in all, I was happy to attend and would gladly return if invited.