



## Message from President

Dear SSO Members,

### **COVID-19**

I was recently reminded of the epic book 'The Emperor of All Maladies' by Siddhartha Mukherjee. The author had taken on the mammoth task of charting the significant historical events in oncology over a broad sweep of time – a riveting read. If 'The Emperor of All Maladies Part II' were to be written 100-1000 years from now, I do wonder how COVID-19's impact on oncological care would be interpreted.



Living through COVID-19 times has shone the spotlight on the human immune system, Darwinian evolution by natural selection, global healthcare inequalities (resources, infrastructure, service provision), let alone how each and every one's daily life has been changed. Endless squinting at computer/phone screens and interminable talking during video conferencing, tighter scheduling of meetings (because with Zoom, we can!), and continually breathing N95-filtered air have all led to poorer eyesight, parched throats/hoarse voices, heightened stress levels, and an indelible imprint of the N95 mask on our collective psyche – and face.

SSO was the first professional medical society in issuing a consensus statement in January 2021, regarding COVID-19 vaccination in cancer patients.

### **SSO Meetings/Events**

Meeting attendance numbers soared. Greater accessibility is a clear advantage of virtual conferences; savings in carbon emissions is another (international air travel leaves a big environmental footprint). Networking, however, has taken a hit – this is a situation where in-person meetings are irreplaceable.

SSO's list of virtual meetings grew over 2020-2021 – some were held in conjunction with other professional medical societies, local and international. The topics reflected the composition of SSO Membership, spanning the disciplines of Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Surgical Oncology, Palliative Medicine. Meeting attendance saw robust participation from our colleagues from neighbouring countries.

The SSO Medical Oncology Review Course was a hit – again. The presentations were top-notch. The active participation by the audience was gratifying. Watching the exiting Senior Residents writhe in agony during the mock viva was akin to watching Squid Game – variably described as macabre and voyeuristic. Well Done to the Senior Residents who successfully exited in July 2021!

Instead of combining with Best of ASCO (BASCO), the SSO Annual Scientific Meeting 2021 was a standalone affair. Abstract submissions reached a record number. Needless to say, the overall quality of the presentations was excellent. Whether BASCO will be resumed in 2022 remains to be seen – we shall be keeping our ear to the ground.

ESMO Asia Congress 2021 was converted to ESMO Asia Virtual Oncology Week 2021. This covered ESMO highlights of the year, including special sessions on new practice-changing

data. In the spirit of collaboration, SSO continued to participate in ESMO's project on Pan-Asian Guidelines Adaptation (PAGA).

### **Healthcare Policy**

There had been greater engagement between SSO and the Ministry of Health, specifically the Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE), as regards national healthcare financing (MediShield Life [MSL] in cancer treatment) and other healthcare-related policy-making. In October 2020, SSO responded to MOH's call for public consultation on MSL and its use/role in the future. A series of meetings ensued. In August 2021, it was announced that a more granular set of MSL claims criteria would come into effect in September 2022. The 'positive list' is a dynamic one, which ACE intends to update from the health economic / cost effectiveness standpoint, together with the generation of clinical data, preferably guided by clinical practice guidelines, such as the Singapore Cancer Network (SCAN) guidelines. This is an area that SSO aims to be involved in by partnering the guardian of the SCAN guidelines – the Chapter of Medical Oncologists of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore.

SSO wrote an op-ed on healthcare financing of cancer drugs, vis-à-vis MediShield Life and Singapore's healthcare ecosystem, which was published in the Straits Times and LianHe ZaoBao in August 2021. There were also TV interviews on local news.

By virtue of being a professional medical society, consisting of clinicians from different specialties involved in the clinical care of cancer patients, SSO is keen to continue to lend its voice and share the clinician's perspective in matters pertaining to cancer care in Singapore.

### **In Gratitude**

The fact that SSO is able to achieve its objectives is due to the support it has received from multiple parties. Pharmaceutical companies and other industry partners are our steadfast allies in pushing our agenda in education and research. They have been instrumental in the sourcing of expert speakers, time-tabling and convening of meetings, and managing to remain cheerful and unfazed by doctors' tardiness in response, grumpiness, and unexpected meeting interruptions by IT-related incidents. Other professional medical societies/bodies, such as ESMO, ASCO, and our regional sister oncology societies, have collaborated with SSO or participated in SSO events, and in so doing, demonstrated the strong professional bond of the international community of oncology doctors. Our Secretariat, Globewerks, has been working tirelessly in providing administrative support for SSO events and activities, as well as managing our website and social media presence.

SSO Members: Your participation in and feedback on the SSO events is invaluable. You are the sine qua non of SSO's realising of its mission objectives.

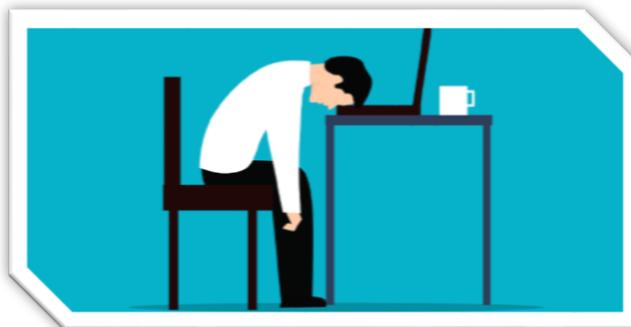
To all who have supported SSO in all different ways: Thank You.

Best Wishes for 2022.

Elaine Lim  
President  
Singapore Society of Oncology

## Medical Oncology Review Course 2021

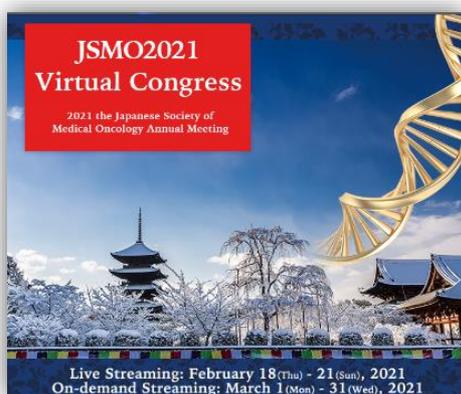
Dr. Dawn Chong (SSO Treasurer, ExCo Member) held the reins in organising this highly-popular course, 5-7 February 2021, conducted virtually for the first time. Thankfully, the internet connection for live broadcast was uninterrupted, which made for a smooth running of the 3-day course. The speakers'/tutors' presentations were stellar – condensed, but clear. The audience was actively participating - there was a constant stream of questions in the Chat box. The mock viva on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day was terrifying and gripping, a suitably dramatic flourish at the end of the course.



As the format of the Medical Oncology Exit Examination changes, so will the SSO Medical Oncology Review Course. In this regard, there will be modifications to the course content, as well as the timing. Details will be announced in due course.

## JSMO 2021 Virtual Congress

This was held 18-21 February 2021. Dr. Elaine Lim (SSO President) represented SSO in Co-Chairing a plenary session with Prof. Chikashi Ishioka (JSMO President).



## Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) 2021

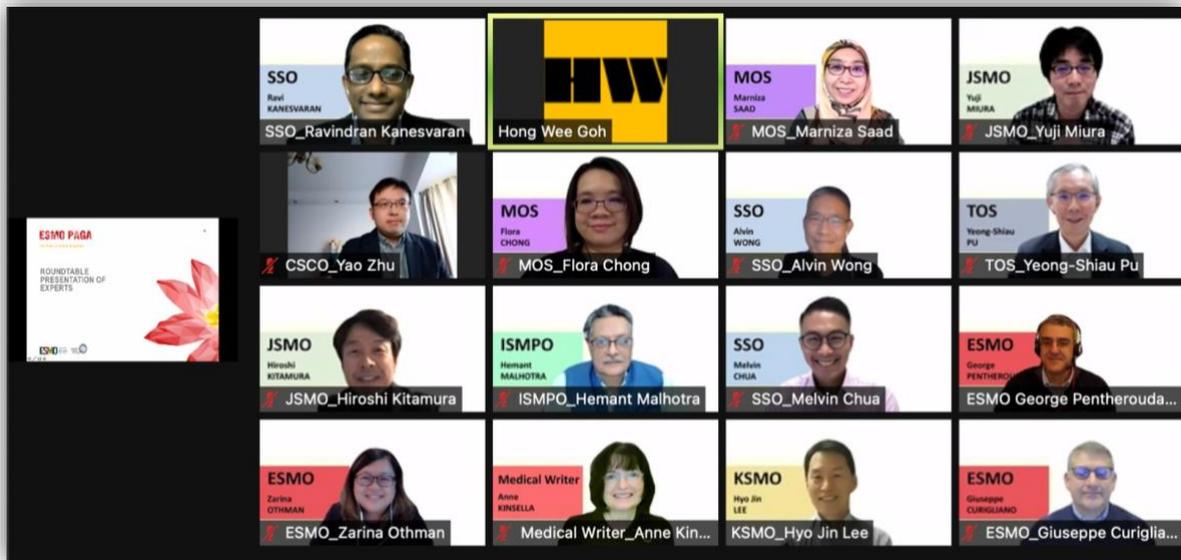


The time usually allotted to Best of ASCO (BASCO) was devoted to SSO's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), 9-11 July 2021. Dr. Raghav Sundar (ExCo Member) and Dr. Melvin Chua (ExCo Member) were the Scientific Chairs, and Dr. Dawn Chong (SSO Treasurer, ExCo Member) was the Organising Chair. Working in concert with Globewerks, the programme was meticulously planned out. Concurrent sessions were held in order to accommodate the large amount of data chosen for presentation. Speaker participation was garnered locally and internationally. The number of abstract submissions of original work reached an all-time high. For the first time, the shortlisted candidates made oral presentations, and were quizzed by both the Scientific Chairs. A course in Clinical Trial Design and the SSO – Cancer Immunotherapy Consortium conference were also held in conjunction with the SSO ASM.

Whether BASCO will be revived and resumed in 2022 is still undecided. Nonetheless, SSO is making preparations for a hybrid meeting. Updates will be provided in due course.

# ESMO's Pan-Asia Guidelines Adaptation (PAGA)

SSO continued its contribution to the PAGA discussions. This was a Urology year with focus on Renal and Prostate. Dr. Ravindran Kanesvaran (SSO Past President) led SSO's representation.



## ESMO Asia Congress

ESMO Asia Congress is usually held in Singapore. It was converted to ESMO Asia Virtual Oncology Week, 17-23 November 2021. Practice-changing highlights were presented, as well as Pan-Asian Adapted Guidelines. ESMO Preceptorship Courses were also run. SSO was an Endorsing Society.

**ESMO ASIA VIRTUAL  
ONCOLOGY WEEK**

**17-23 NOVEMBER 2021**



## ASCO Breakthrough 2022

ASCO Breakthrough 2022 is currently planned to be run in a hybrid format, Yokohama, Japan, 25-27 August 2022. SSO is involved in its Advisory Committee.



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