

Witnessing history: the Infectious Diseases Society of Taiwan. The first twenty years

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In the blink of an eye, 20 years have passed since the establishment of the Infectious Diseases Society of Taiwan. In these two decades, we have witnessed the metamorphosis of medical practice in Taiwan and sustained the effects of continued emerging infectious diseases. The evolution has included the implementation of the national health insurance, the inclusion of infection control as a standard in hospital accreditation, the 1998 Enterovirus 71 outbreak, the “921” great earthquake in 1999, the 2002 dengue outbreak in southern Taiwan, the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome pandemic, the resurgence of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and tuberculosis and the ongoing threat of avian flu.

Through these challenges, the efforts of members and specialists of the Infectious Diseases Society have been pivotal. Reliving the Society’s history from the day it was established on September 20 of 1987 evokes mixed emotions, but most of all, brings heartfelt appreciation of the efforts and commitment of the founders and their successors.

Historical Background

Taiwan had only a few infectious diseases specialists in the earlier years. The roster included National Taiwan University’s Professors Wei-Chuan Hsieh (謝維銓) and Chin-Yun Lee (李慶雲), who have strived diligently for more than 30 years, the late Professor Hsien-Chen Hsieh (謝獻臣) of Kaohsiung Medical University, who pioneered parasitic research in southern Taiwan, and the late Professor Deh-Lin Cheng (鄭德齡) of the Veterans General Hospital, who underwent a comprehensive infectious diseases training in the United States and established the “Section of

Communicable Diseases” (傳染病科) in the hospital 4 years later, which was eventually named “Section of Infectious Diseases”.

In 1973, when the practice of infectious diseases was relatively new and the heads of the infectious diseases section of the 3 teaching universities in northern Taiwan cooperated to start the first “Infectious Diseases Case Conference in Northern Taiwan”. Similar activities ensued, initially in the northern part of the country and eventually in the south. This started the closer association of infectious diseases specialists nationwide that led to the predecessor of “The Infectious Diseases Society of Taiwan”.

While the society was yet to be formed, the need for infectious diseases specialists gradually increased. On January 1, 1987, after a conference in the National Taiwan University, an assembly was held and discussed the formation of the Society for Infectious Diseases. On March 14, 1987, 39 pioneers, including Professor Wei-Chuan Hsieh, requested from Ministry of Internal Affairs approval of the formation of “The Infectious Diseases Society of the Republic of China”. The proposal was approved on July 25 of the same year, and the founders of the Society convened for the first time in the National Taiwan University on August 10, 1987.

The 15 members of the planning committee included: Wei-Chuan Hsieh (謝維銓), Chin-Yun Lee (李慶雲), Deh-Lin Cheng (鄭德齡), Cheng-Yi Liu (劉正義), Mong-Ling Chu (朱夢麟), Ming-Yuan Chou (周名淵), Fu-Yuan Huang (黃富源), Chun-Ming Lee (李聰明), Tzuo-Yien Lin (林奏延), Hsieh-Song Leu (呂學重), Jiun-Shyong Fann (范俊雄), Shi-Hwang Tseng (曾禧鳳), Cheng-Hua Chuang (莊徵華), Yue-Jun Lau (劉有增) and Kao-Pin Hwang (黃高彬). The group elected Wei-Chuan Hsieh (謝維銓) as the committee chairman, Cheng-Yi Liu (劉正義) as secretary general, and Muh-Yong Yen (顏慕庸) and Chia-Jing Lee (李嘉靖) as administrative secretaries. A

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second assembly was held on September 4, with 174 memberships approved and the decision was reached to hold the inauguration of the Society on September 20, 1987.

The Inauguration

It was 2 o'clock in the afternoon of September 20, 1987 when the first group of board members of the Society were elected in the 7th auditorium of the National Taiwan University Hospital. Professor Wei-Chuan Hsieh was the first elected president of the Society and Dr. Cheng-Yi Liu was the first secretary general. There were 8 council members and 3 supervising members, with all officers serving a 3 year-term.

In his inaugural speech, President Wei-Chuan Hsieh stated "...facing the transformation of pathogens, emergence of resistant pathogens, nosocomial infections, opportunistic infections and polymicrobial infections complicates further the management of patients..." "On the inauguration of the Society today, I believe that we could further accelerate the development of the study of infectious diseases, training of specialists for infectious diseases, improvement of medical quality and strengthening of international collaborations, provide new information in infectious diseases and antimicrobial treatment within the country, provide continuing medical education, set up standards for infectious diseases specialists and promotion of national health in collaboration with epidemiologists, public health and preventive medicine specialists..." President Hsieh clearly pointed out the goals and responsibilities of the Society, and these remain in place today.

In his speech "The Goals of An Infectious Diseases Society", the honored guest Professor Donald Armstrong noted "...These should include: 1. Medicine; 2. Government personnel responsible for infectious diseases; and 3. Representatives of industry responsible for producing antimicrobial agents and diagnostic tests, and any others involved in infectious diseases ...", "...An ideal society would include not only infectious diseases doctors and medical microbiologists, but also public health officials and educators, government officials and representatives of industry ..." Professor Armstrong further advocated the development of the Society from a higher level perspective, with an open heart and attitude, in order that it achieve its goals.

At the same time, the honored guest Professor Chien Liu (劉鈞) encouraged all members with a chronicle of his experiences in infectious diseases in an address entitled "A Personal Glimpse in Infectious Diseases in the Last Twenty Years". From the establishment of the Infectious Diseases Society, he had seen the selfless contributions of senior infectious diseases specialists in their leadership of younger members and in the development and planning of the future of infectious diseases specialists.

Achievements

The first set of board members fulfilled their tasks by September 22, 1990 and the six sets of board members in the intervening years have moved towards the goals set by the pioneers of the Society. From a starting number of 174 members, the Society has accumulated 548 members to date. There have been 14 members of the council and 5 supervising members since 1997 and "Standards for Hospitals Training Infectious Diseases Specialists" and "Training of Infectious Diseases Specialists" have been set up. In January 1992, the first qualifying examination for infectious diseases specialists was held and a course on infection control for fellows of infectious diseases was started in 1998.

The first volume of "Journal of Infectious Diseases Society R.O.C." was distributed formally from July to September of 1988. In 1997, a decision was reached to release the Journal together with the "Chinese Journal Microbiology and Immunology". The Journal was renamed and released officially as "Journal of Microbiology, Immunology and Infection; JMII" in January of 1998 and was published bimonthly since the year 2004. The Society has been working towards earning accreditation from Science Citation Index. At the same time, the Journal has been listed by six international medical indices. In 2001, the Journal was acknowledged by the World Health Organization Library and Information Networks for Knowledge and listed as one of the country's top three journals.

In 1996, the Society conferred the honors of the Infectious Diseases Society of the Republic of China Outstanding Research Award, for medical residents, medical journals and outstanding research, and the Infectious Diseases Legacy Award for outstanding individuals who have contributed in the advancement of the discipline of infectious diseases. In 1990, the Study for Monitoring Antimicrobial Resistance Trends

(SMART) Program was established to monitor the status of antimicrobial resistance in Taiwan. The Program has since published 13 articles. Ten different treatment guidelines have been developed since 1990 and have all been published in the Society's Journal [1-10]. In 2005, the Society was formally renamed the Infectious Diseases Society of Taiwan and was commissioned to host the 11th Western Pacific Congress of Chemotherapy and Infectious Diseases (WPCCID) scheduled to be held in 2008. Every step in itself is a historical moment that fulfils the dreams and goals envisioned by the Society.

The Future

Looking back over these past 20 years, our hearts are filled with endless gratitude and appreciation. We are indebted to all founders and members of the Society. Your support and encouragement has fostered the steady improvement of the Society. In the years to come, the Society will continue to uphold its beliefs, to nourish creativity and work together with the same heart and purpose, to realize its vision. Let's make history together.

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