Asian-Australasian Federation of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology (AAFITN) Biennial Congress 2023 Hong Kong: A Celebration of 30 Years of AAFITN’s Advancements and Remarkable Journey

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The 15th Asian-Australasian Federation of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology (AAFITN) Biennial Congress, successfully held from October 13 to 15, 2023, in Hong Kong, marked a significant milestone in the federation’s journey that spans three decades of progress, collaboration, and innovation. Founded in 1994 by the visionary Professor Ling Feng, AAFITN embarked on a mission to foster advancement in interventional and therapeutic neuroradiology across Asia and Australasia. The last time the Congress graced Hong Kong was during its 5th iteration in 2002, under the guidance of the late Prof. John Ching-Kwong Kwok, the neurointervention giant and founding president of the Hong Kong Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology (HKSITN).1,2 Now, 21 years later, the 15th Congress returned to Hong Kong, demonstrating the resilience and enduring significance of AAFITN in the ever-evolving field of neurointervention.

The AAFITN stands as a beacon in the realm of neurointervention, fostering collaboration, education, and advancement in the dynamic region of Asia and Australasia. Chartered as an international non-profit entity, AAFITN operates with a steadfast commitment to the development and advancement of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology. The federation’s official office, currently situated in Melbourne, Australia, serves as the hub for its multifaceted activities. English is the official language, ensuring a cohesive communication platform for its diverse membership. Officers of the federation dedicate their service without financial remuneration, emphasizing a commitment to the organization’s mission.

AAFITN’s mission is multi-faceted, encapsulating several pivotal objectives:

- Promoting the discipline: AAFITN is dedicated to promoting all aspects of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology, serving as a catalyst for advancements in the field.
- Coordination and circulation: the federation coordinates the activities of its members, ensuring the seamless circulation of documents relevant to the discipline across Asia and Australasia.
- Interdisciplinary relations: AAFITN fosters interdisciplinary relations, creating synergies between Interventional

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Received: November 29, 2023
Revised: December 5, 2023
Accepted: December 6, 2023

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pISSN 2093-9043
eISSN 2233-6273
and Therapeutic Neuroradiology and other specialties dedicated to central nervous system disorder diagnosis and treatment.

• Training and certification: a core objective involves promoting the development of effective teaching methods, maintaining standards of training, and facilitating proper certification in Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology.

• Research promotion: AAFITN actively promotes research into neurovascular diseases, especially among junior Interventional Neuroradiologists and trainees.

The operational activities of AAFITN are diverse and impactful, which include Scientific Meetings—the federation organizes a biennial scientific meeting, providing a platform for members to engage in scholarly discourse and knowledge exchange. The meeting’s location is determined by a council constituted by representative members; Educational courses: AAFITN conducts educational courses in Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology, ensuring continuous learning and skill development within the community; Awards and prizes: to recognize excellence, the federation organizes educational awards and scientific prizes, reinforcing its commitment to educational and training purposes; Journal publication: AAFITN supports the publication and distribution of official journals, Intervention Neuroradiology in collaboration with the World Federation of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology (WFITN), Neurointervention in collaboration with the Korean Society of Interventional Neuroradiology, and other educational publications dedicated to advancing Interventional Neuroradiology.

The federation’s leadership, embodied in the Executive Committee, comprises distinguished individuals who steer its course (2018–2023) and contribute significantly to the success of the event, deserves a well note of thanks from all the faculties and delegates:

• President: Prof. Shigeru Miyachi
• Vice president and president-elect: Dr. Jeyaledchumy Mahadevan
• Immediate past president: Prof. Suh Dae Chul
• General secretary: Dr. Anchalee Churojana
• Treasurer: Dr. Zhang Hongqi
• Australia: Winston Chong
• China: Ling Feng, Zhang Hongqi
• Hong Kong (region): George Wong Kwok-Chu
• India: Uday Limaye
• Indonesia: Prijono Sidipratoma, Cindy Sadikin
• Japan: Shigeru Miyachi
• Korea: Suh Dae Chul
• Malaysia: Dr. Jeyaledchumy Mahadevan, Josephine Subramaniam
• Pakistan: Umair Rashid
• Singapore: Winston Lim Eng-Hoe
• Sri Lanka (new): Lakmalie Paranahewa
• Taiwan (region): Dr. Michael Teng Mu-Huo, Dr. Luo Chao-Bao
• Thailand: Dr. Sirintara Pongpech, Dr. Anchalee Churojana
• Vietnam: Dr. Pham Minh-Thong, Dr. Cuong Tran-Chi
• Kazakhstan: Sarshayer Marat

The 15th AAFITN Biennial Congress between October 13 to 15, 2023, in Hong Kong signifies a pivotal moment for AAFITN. With 5 years having passed since the last fully face-to-face meeting in 2018 and 3 years from the last hybrid meeting in 2020 due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the 15th Biennial Congress emerged as the first fully face-to-face meeting of the federation after the challenging period posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The anticipation among the 276 attendees from 29 countries or regions to reconnect, share experiences, and learn from one another underscores the intrinsic value of in-person interactions within the neurointerventional community. With 47 faculty speakers and 80 oral presentations or lectures, as well as numerous poster presentations and technology suits or booths, the event proves to be a nexus of knowledge, collaboration, and celebration, uniting experts and professionals in the field of neurointervention.3

In addition to the intellectually stimulating program, the event also offered a delightful culinary experience. Delegates were treated to a sumptuous buffet lunch and dinner at the Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel. The meals provided a perfect opportunity for networking and socializing, allowing participants to build connections and strengthen professional relationships. In the 13rd October morning, we kicked off with plenary session, and Women in NeuroIR, followed by the Stryker sponsored session. In the afternoon, we had an insightful opening ceremony with presidents’ keynote speeches (Prof. Michihiro Tanaka, Prof. Shigeru Miyachi, Prof. Feng Ling, Prof. George Wong, Dr. William Poon) on the history of AAFITN, WFITN, and the late Prof. John Kwok, the neurointervention pioneer and founding president of HKSITN. Moreover, traditional Chinese lion dance and Sichuan face-changing opera incorporate cultural elements into the event, recognising the significance of promoting cross-cul-
tural understanding and appreciation among the diverse group of participants.

Day 2 of the AAFITN 2023 conference was filled with exciting highlights and valuable insights for delegates. There were sponsored sessions by MicroVention, Balt, and Medtronic. These sessions provided a platform for these companies to showcase their latest advancements in the field of interventional neuroradiology. Another notable feature of Day 2 was the variable cases on the treatment of arteriovenous fistulas. These cases presented a wide range of challenging scenarios, allowing attendees to witness different treatment approaches and techniques. Leading experts in the field shared their expertise and discussed the nuances of each case, fostering informative discussions and knowledge exchange among the participants. The first fully represented face-to-face AAFITN council meeting after COVID-19 pandemic was also successfully held in the morning (Fig. 1).

The last day of the AAFITN 2023 marked the culmination of a successful and enlightening event. The conference continued its tradition of bringing together experts from different countries to share their experiences in tackling challenging neurointervention cases. Delegates had the opportunity to learn from the best in the field, gaining valuable insights and knowledge that would shape their future practice. The day concluded with a grand closing ceremony, where esteemed speakers took the stage to reflect on the event and express their gratitude. The AAFITN 2023 Congress president George Wong highlighted the city’s commitment to advancing the field of neurointervention and the invaluable connections and collaborations that had been forged during the event. Congress presidents of the upcoming AAFITN 2025 Bangkok (Prof. Anchalee Churojana and Prof. Dr. Siritara Pongpech Singhara) and WFITN 2024 New York (Prof. Seon-Kyu Lee) and WFITN 2026 Busan (Prof. Yong-Sam Shin) Congresses shared their excitement and anticipation for the future of interventional neuroradiology, emphasizing the progressive nature of the field and the importance of continued collaboration and knowledge exchange. We also congratulate India for the successful bid for AAFITN 2027. After the group picture taking at the end of closing ceremony, participants departed with a renewed sense of inspiration and a commitment to applying the shared knowledge to improve patient care.

As AAFITN continues its journey, the 15th Congress represents a testament to its enduring commitment to advancing Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology in the Asia-Australasian region. The congress emphasized AAFITN’s shared goals in advancing minimally invasive treatments for various neurovascular conditions. The federation, consisting of professional societies in interventional neuroradiology and endovascular neurosurgery, remains dedicated to improving patient lives through education, research, and collaboration.

Fig 1. Asian-Australasian Federation of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology council meeting held on 15th October 2023, Hong Kong.
Prof. George Wong’s gratitude for the opportunity to host the Congress in Hong Kong reflected the collective commitment to furthering the field’s impact on a global scale. The Congress proved to be exceptional, featuring a diverse scientific program curated by internationally renowned experts. Topics ranging from the latest developments in interventional neuroradiology and endovascular neurosurgery to neuroanatomy ensured a comprehensive exploration of the field’s advancements. Hong Kong, with its rich cultural heritage and world-class dining and entertainment scene, provided a fitting backdrop for attendees to explore, network, and socialize. The vibrant cityscape became an integral part of the Congress experience, offering a unique blend of professional and cultural immersion.

CONCLUSION: AAFITN’S LEGACY LIVES ON

The return of the Biennial Congress to Hong Kong after 21 years not only marked a momentous occasion but also reflected the enduring legacy of AAFITN. From its inception in 1994 to the present day, AAFITN has been a catalyst for progress in neurointervention, fostering collaboration, embracing diversity, and shaping the future of minimally invasive treatments for neurovascular conditions. The 15th Congress in Hong Kong became a testament to the federation’s resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to advancing the field for the benefit of patients and practitioners alike. As delegates dispersed, the echoes of shared knowledge, cultural exchanges, and the anticipation of future congresses reverberated, solidifying AAFITN’s place as a cornerstone in the global neurointerventional community.

**Fund**
None.

**Ethics Statement**
This was not a human population study; therefore, neither approval from the Institutional Review Board nor the obtaining of informed consent was required.

**Conflicts of Interest**
GKCW has been the Editorial Board of the *Neurointervention* since 2018. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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