

## **First Asian Congress on Cancer in the Older Patients 22-23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011, Kuching, Malaysia**

It is timely that we are organizing this congress in Kuching, Malaysia on 22-23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011 under the auspices of SIOG. This will be the first time this congress is held in Asia with speakers from Europe, USA, United Kingdom, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. Various topics on cancer in the older patients, assessment, and treatment of some of the common cancers, hematological cancers and nutrition are discussed at this congress.

Globally, the demography of proportion of the population aged 65 years or over will change dramatically over the next 20 years. There will be rapid increase from 737 million in 2009 to 2 billion by 2050. Furthermore, 64% of the world's older persons live in less developed regions and by 2050, 79% will do so. According to the National Cancer Institute ([NCI](#)), 60% of the newly diagnosed malignancies are found in people over the age of 65 years. The same group accounts for 70% of the deaths. Overall, the elderly are 10 times more likely to get cancer and 15 times more likely to die from cancer than people under the age of 65 years. The projections stated by WHO, that because of increase in cancer incidence, cancer mortality will increase to 12 million people by the year 2030. Since cancer treatment has become more effective, the number of cancer survivors and the prevalence of cancer in the population will also increase.

The registry of the Department of Radiotherapy, Oncology & Palliative care has revealed that more than 300 new cancer patients above the age of 65 years are seen annually. Most common cancers seen are lung and colorectal in males and breast and colorectal in females. Other than breast cancer, most cancers present in advanced stage. Hence we feel that often the late presentation may be related to lack of awareness in the community both the public as well as the health care professionals. In addition, there is a general perception in our community that older patients will not tolerate treatment well and hence a greater reluctance for seeking medical attention.

We feel that having an international event in Kuching, which is a small city with a population of 500,000, will generate an interest on an unknown subject like "geriatric oncology". The main intent of this first Congress in Asia is to create awareness amongst the health professionals on the importance of managing this population who often go "unnoticed", being under treated. Our hope is that those who attend this congress will realize the level of under treatment that is currently occurring in our own places and take measures to improve that status. Every small step taken by each individual will have a big impact.