

Review

Japanese Perspective and Prospect Beyond the Pandemic of the Asian Society of Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

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ABSTRACT

The Asian Society for Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (ASCPaLM) is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1975 for the societies primarily engaged in laboratory medicine (clinical pathology). Its aim is to enhance the development and practice of laboratory medicine to promote better support the health and well-being of the communities it serves. The organization support its constituent societies in Asia, as well as its other members through communication, cooperation in education, research and practice. The Japanese Society for Laboratory Medicine (JSLM) has played a crucial role in establishing ASCPaLM and continues to be actively involved in its operation. It needs to keep to demonstrate leadership in these activities, leveraging its innovation initiative, particularly through collaboration with industry sectors. The ASCPaLM contributed to combatting the COVID-19 pandemic by sharing experiences and knowledge, with clinical pathologists and laboratory professionals at the forefront of laboratory practice and services. To address the weakness of communities that the pandemic has exposed, it is an important time to take action and achieve the the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by promoting innovation, technology transfer, and continuous quality improvement of the laboratory practice to meet requirements in international standards.

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Key Words

Asia, clinical pathology, laboratory medicine, congress, organization, COVID-19

I. Aim and history of the organization.....

1. Aim

The Asian Society for Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (ASCPaLM) is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1975 for the societies primarily involved in laboratory medicine (clinical pathology)¹⁾. The organization's aim is to improve the development and practices of laboratory medicine to promote the health and well-being of the communities it serves (**Table 1**). The ASCPaLM strives to support its constituent societies in Asia and other members globally by facilitating communication, cooperation in education, research and practice. Its goal is to promote the information exchange on activities, experiences, and knowledge among Asian countries and contribute to health, medical care, and

welfare both in and outside the region by maintaining high-quality of clinical laboratory practice.

2. History

The ASCPaLM has a long history dating back to the early days of laboratory medicine, and has successfully facilitated collaboration among the clinical laboratory societies throughout Asia. The history of ASCPaLM dates back to the Korean-Japanese Conference of Clinical Pathology, which held the first conference in Seoul, South Korea in 1975. Since then it has been held every two years, alternating between Japan and South Korea. In time, other Asian countries including Taiwan joined as full-members. At the 9th conference in 1990, it was reorganized and renamed as 'the Asian Conference of Clinical Pathology: ACCP'. The 1st ACCP was held in Sapporo, Japan, under the co-chairmanship of Profes-

Table 1-1 Organization & Committees

1. Organization and its Name	The organization is a “non-profit” organization for the societies whose main activities are in laboratory medicine (clinical pathology). It shall be known as “the Asian Society for Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine” . Abbreviation of the Society shall be ASCPaLM.
2. Purpose	The purpose of the Asian Society for Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine herein after referred to as the Society exists 1) to promote improvement in the health and well-being of the communities it serves through improving the development and practice of laboratory medicine (clinical pathology) and 2) to support not only its constituent societies in Asia but also its other members through communication cooperation in education research and practice.
3. Membership	3.1 Geographic eligibility for membership shall apply to societies and normally having its activities in countries/ areas in Asia and the areas shall be based on geography and not political considerations. 3.2 Classes of memberships are Full membership (Constituent Society), Affiliate membership, and Corporate membership. 3.2.1 Full Membership (Constituent Society): Full membership is available to the recognized and established national/area societies of laboratory medicine (clinical pathology) operated mainly by physicians in the area and has the voting right and the eligibility for election. 3.2.2 Affiliate membership has three categories 1) A society from a country/area within Asia may apply to be an Affiliate membership if there is no recognized and established society of laboratory medicine (clinical pathology) in that country/area. 2) An international or national society not from Asia but having an interest in laboratory medicine (clinical pathology) may apply for an Affiliate membership. 3) An individual physician from a country/area in Asia may apply to be an Affiliate membership for a certain period of time if there is no recognized and established society of laboratory medicine (clinical pathology) or no appropriate affiliate membership society in that country/area and shall be encouraged to organize a national/area society of laboratory medicine. 3.2.3 Corporate membership: Corporate membership is open to manufacturers and also distributors of clinical laboratory equipment and reagents. 3.2.4 Each Affiliate and Corporate member may send one observer to the meetings of the Society. The observers will not have the voting rights and the eligibility for election. 3.2.5 There shall be only one class of membership for any one geographical area except for Corporate membership.
4. Council	4.1 The affairs of the Society shall be conducted by a Council. 4.2 Each constituent society shall appoint two delegates to Council who shall be a member of the governing body of that constituent society. The society may appoint a deputy who may attend a Council Meeting in place of the delegate. 4.3 Members of the Executive Committee shall be members of the Council ex-officio. 4.4 Affiliate and Corporate members shall not be a member of Council. 4.5 At least a half (50%) plus one of the total memberships of the Society present at the Council Meeting shall form a quorum. 4.6 The Executive Committee may determine matters by postal or e-mail ballot of the Executive Committee or by postal or e-mail ballot of the members of Council as it shall deem fit. At least one half of either the Executive Committee or Council members’ replies must be received before such matters are considered valid. 4.7 Important issues such as proposal for changes of bylaws should be decided by more than a half of attending council members or members replying the E-mail. 4.8 Council shall meet every year in which one is at times and in places to coincide with the Congress which is scheduled to be held every two years or on occasions as deemed necessary by the Executive Committee. 4.9 At least three months’ notice will be given of a Council Meeting and particulars of its agenda will be circulated to all members at least one month in advance of the meeting. 4.10 The following points will be considered at the Council Meeting: 4.10.1 The previous term’ s accounts and report of the Executive Committee. 4.10.2 The election of office-bearers for the next term of office. 4.11 The admission of new members to the Society shall be decided by Council by a simple majority vote.

Table 1-2 Organization & Committees

5. Executive Committee	5.1 There shall be an Executive Committee which shall be responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the Society.
	5.2 The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, the President-Elect (the Vice- President), Past-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Auditors.
	5.3 The term of office of the President, the Vice President. Past-President, Auditors, and Treasurer shall be two years whichever is the longer. The President the Vice-President Past-President Auditors and Treasurer shall retire on completion of the term of office and shall be ineligible for re-election for a further term in the same office.
	5.4 The first term for the Secretary shall be three years. After the first term it shall be two years or from one Council Meeting to the next Council Meeting whichever is the longer. The Secretary shall be eligible for re-election.
	5.5 The duties of the office-bearers are as follows:
	5.5.1 The President shall act as Chairman at all Council and Executive Committee Meetings. He or she or a designate shall represent the Society in its dealings with outside organizations. The President or designate will be a member ex-officio of all Standing Committees of the Society.
	5.5.2 The Vice-President shall deputize for the President in the latter's absence.
	5.5.3 The Secretary shall keep all records except financial of the Society and shall be responsible for their correctness. He or she will keep Minutes of all Council and Executive Committee Meetings.
	5.5.4 The Treasurer shall keep an account of all monies collected and disbursed on behalf of the society and all other monetary transactions and shall be responsible for their correctness. All monies will be deposited in a bank in a designated country to be named by the Committee.
6. Funding of the Society	6.1 With the advice from Council, the Executive committee shall set the membership fee (annual due).
	6.2 There shall be no membership fee for Affiliate and Corporate membership.
7. Amendment of the Constitution	7.1 The Constitution will be amended by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the membership of the Council.
	7.2 Notice of proposed amendments of the Constitution shall be given by the Secretary in writing no less than three months prior to a vote to amend the Constitution.
8. Audit	Auditors will be required to audit the accounts of the Society and present a report upon them at the Council Meeting. They may be required by the President to audit the Society's accounts for any period within their tenure of office and make a report to the Council.

sor Teiichi Sasaki and Professor Ichiro Kurokawa from Sapporo Medical College (**Table 2**). The ACCP continued to be held every two years until the 8th meeting in 2004, when the name was changed to the current 'Asian Society of Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, ASCPaLM⁽¹⁾. Today, the ASCPaLM has five full-member countries: i.e., Japanese Society of Laboratory Medicine (JSLM), Korean Society for Laboratory Medicine (KSLM), Indonesian Association of Clinical Pathologists (IACP), Taiwan Society of Clinical Pathologists (TSCP) and Mongolian Association of Laboratory Medicine (MALM). All of representatives and congress are endorsed by their respective national society of laboratory medicine.

II. Japan's efforts

1. Host of the Congresses

In Japan, following the 1st ACCP in 1990, the 5th ACCP was held in Kochi in 1998 under the chairman of Professor Jiro Endo from Shimane Medical University. The 9th ASCPaLM congress was held in Kobe in 2006 under the chairman of Professor Shunichi Kumagai from Kobe University, and the 12th was held in Kyoto in 2012 under

the chairman of Professor Hakuo Takahashi from Kansai Medical University, and the 17th was in Kobe in 2022 under the chairman of Professor Hayato Miyachi from Tokai University and Nitobe-Bunka College⁽²⁾.

2. Financial and academic support

To promote cooperation with international organizations in clinical pathology and laboratory medicine, JSLM has closely worked with international organizations like ASCPaLM and WASPaLM⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾. In 1989, JSLM established the Asian Exchange Fund to provide financial and academic support to ASCPaLM congress held in Asian member countries. To encourage young scientists, in 2009, JSLM created an award to recognize and support their research presentation at international conferences, such as the Congresses of the ASCPaLM and the World Congresses of WASPaLM.

3. Collaboration with WASCPaLM

Collaboration between ASCPaLM and WASCPaLM has been actively developed and promoted by the Japanese Presidents of WASPaLM⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾. In 1992, at the 2nd ACCP Conference, a WASPaLM Bureau Meeting was held concurrently with the suggestion of Professor Tadashi Kawai from Jichii University, as the President of WASPaLM.

Table 2 Congress of the Asian Society of Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Congress	Year	Chairman	Venue
1 ACCP	1990	Teiichi Sasaki and Ichiro Kurokawa	Sapporo, Japan
2	1992	Jay Sik Kim	Cheju, South Korea
3	1994	Jui-San Chen	Taipei, Taiwan
4	1996	Rustadi Sosrosumihardjo	Yogyakarta, Japan
5	1998	Jiro Endo	Kochi, Japan
6	2000	Soon Ho Kim	Busan, South Korea
7	2002	Jang Hwa Lee	Kahsung, Taiwan
8 ASCPaLM	2004	A.K. Amaan	Medan, Indonesia
9	2006	Shunichi Kumagai	Kobe, Japan
10	2008	Namid Munkhtuvshin	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
11	2010	Hardjieno	Jakarta, Indonesia
12	2012	Hakuo Takahashi	Kyoto, Japan
13	2014	Oh Hum Kwon	Seoul, South Korea
14	2016	Tjin-Shing Jap	Taipei, Taiwan
15	2018	M.Oyundelger	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
16	2021	Aryati MS	Virtual, Indonesia
17	2022	Hayato Miyachi	Kobe, Japan
18	2024	Gye-Cheol Kwon	Seoul, South Korea

ACCP, Asian Conference of Clinical Pathology; ASCPaLM, Asian Society for Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

This promoted exchange between ACCP and WASPaLM, leading to approve of the opening of WASPaLM's administrative office in Japan.

Under the leadership and guidance of Professor Masami Murakami from Gunma University, as the President of WASPaLM, a joint symposium between ASCPaLM and WASPaLM was held during the World Congress of WASPaLM held in Kyoto, Japan in 2017, as well in Xi'an, China in 2019. In 2022, JSLM session as an ASCPaLM member was held during the World Congress of WASPaLM at Punta del Este, Uruguay, which was postponed for one year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

III. Combatting COVID-19 pandemic.....

1. Clinical pathologists at the forefront of combatting COVID-19

In 2020, as the President of ASCPaLM, Professor Hayato Miyachi from Tokai University announced to share activities, experiences and knowledges not only among our societies of ASCPaLM and their communities, but also societies and communities from other regions in the world, as follows. The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented experience in human history⁷⁾. It brought to light the crucial role of laboratory services in combatting the spread of the disease. Clinical pathologists and laboratory professionals were at the forefront of the medical laboratories and thus patient care in the medical facilities. All clinical pathologists in each member country of ASCPaLM made the best effort in the laboratory practice for the care of patients and general population

by managing laboratory practices and services. Some of member countries of ASCPaLM successfully controlled the spread of COVID-19 earlier than other areas of the world, by taking an advantage of the laboratory tests for corona virus. The experience and knowledge gained through the laboratory practice in Asia would be useful and helpful for controlling the outbreak in the world and also for preparing for the future surges.

2. The virtual Congress at the pandemic

The 16th ASCPaLM Congress was held in Indonesia virtually for the first time in the history of ASCPaLM⁸⁾. Originally scheduled in September 2020, the meeting was postponed to until January 2021, due to pandemic situation. While clinical pathologist played a pivotal role in COVID-19 pandemic, they must face complex challenges collectively. Therefore, the main theme of Congress was “Unite for Combatting COVID-19”. The goal of Congress was to share knowledge and experience among country members of the society about COVID-19 situation, issues, strategies, and challenges, as well as education of clinical pathologists in pandemic situation. Two symposiums were held under the main theme in the congress: Symposium I focused on the roles of clinical pathologists in the COVID-19 pandemic and Symposium II focused on adaptations for residential programs of clinical pathologists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. The Congress toward the post-corona era

The 17th ASCPaLM Congress took place in October 2022 in Kobe, making a historic moment in the post-corona era for international exchanges²⁾. The main theme

of the congress was the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aimed to address the weakness of communities that the pandemic has exposed. This was an important time to take action and achieve the SDGs in the community that laboratory medicine (clinical pathology) serves, by promoting the innovation, technology transfer, and continuous quality improvement of the laboratory practice to meet requirements in international standards. Laboratory accreditation under the international standard is important as an approach for progress in the goal 3 of SDGs which aspires to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Collaboration and partnership are critical in these efforts. Two symposiums were held under the main theme of SDGs in the congress: Symposium I focused on the impacts of quality laboratory practice on SDGs, and Symposium II focused on preparedness for the next-pandemic.

IV. Perspective and prospects beyond the pandemic

1. Personnel development initiative

Medical laboratories play a crucial role in modern medical practices, as laboratory reported results are integral to physicians' decision-making processes. They help identify risk factors, screen and detect predispositions to symptomatic diseases, confirm or negate diagnoses, guide patient management, and individually tailor therapy for personalized medicine. Clinical pathologists are expected to take a role in knowledge-integrated services including comprehensive approaches in the diagnosis of diseases and consultation, customer intimacy, leadership in multi-disciplinary team-based medicine, which is laboratory-based and the patient centered⁹⁾. In order to support the health and well-being of the communities in modern medical practices, it is more important than ever to invest in human resource development in laboratory medicine and take an initiative in an international community.

In 2017, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Mongolia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to promote mutual exchange in the fields of clinical pathology and laboratory medicine. MOU aimed facilitate cooperation in education, standardization, and academic presentations. As a result, coordination is currently being underway with Asian countries to share educational classes for clinical pathology residents.

2. Quality laboratory practice to meet requirements of the international standards

Compliance with international standards such as ISO 15189, which is the requirements for quality and competence of medical laboratories, demonstrates its reliability

and objectivity for clinical laboratory, emphasizing an importance of the laboratory accreditation¹⁰⁾. There is consistent evidence that shows that accreditation programs improve the process of care provided by healthcare services including clinical trials. The 17th ASCPaLM Congress addressed the importance of quality assurance of medical laboratory service through accreditation under the international standard. The congress also introduced ATLAS (Asian clinical Trials network for cAncerS) project, which was started by National Cancer Center Hospital (NCCH) in 2020, with support by Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED)¹¹⁾. The project aimed to develop a robust Asian Clinical Trials Network, with existing partnerships reinforced in South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, and the clinical trial network expanded to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) such as Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The NCCH is sharing its budget with Asian sites to reinforce their clinical trial infrastructure, offering capacity building programs on clinical trials and high-quality genomic profiling test, and proposing several international clinical research. The project includes a system for collecting samples from Asian countries, central pathological review, genomic profiling tests after specimen quality control, and reporting results to the facilities in Asia. Monitoring the quality of specimen and providing feedback to the site for improvement was also implemented. In the era of genomic medicine, it is more important than ever for medical laboratory to be managed by competent personnel and to comply with international standards such as ISO 15189¹²⁾. Accreditation of medical laboratories that perform genomic profiling tests under ISO 15189 in Asia has been supported by Japan, by implementing an educational course.

3. Innovation initiative

Asia is a region that has experienced remarkable economic development, and with this growth, the field of clinical laboratory medicine is also expanding in each country. As a result, the number of participants in academic meetings has increased as well. For example, in 2016, the largest delegate ever in the history with a total of 88 clinical pathologists participated in the 14th ASCPaLM Congress held in Taipei, Taiwan. In Indonesia, the speciality of clinical pathology is ranked highest among medical doctors, followed by surgery, and then internal medicine and other specialities. This reflects the government's recognition and support of laboratory tests when assessed by a clinical pathologist. In addition to five full-membership countries, each congress includes an increasing number of participants from other Asian coun-

tries such as China, Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal, and India. Efforts have been made to increase the number of the Board and Council members by recruiting member countries among Asian participants.

Collaboration with Asian countries is of great significance for the Japanese industry. Due to the declining birthrate and aging population, Japan is experiencing a decline in its working population. The medical industry is expected to improve its international competitiveness as a remaining growth industry in Japan. Many Japanese manufacturers for in vitro diagnostics are aiming to expand their markets overseas, especially in Asia.

At the 51st Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Clinical Laboratory Automation (JSCLA) held in Yokohama, Japan, in October 2019, ASCPaLM collaborated with the Japanese Association of Clinical Laboratory Systems (JACLaS) which supports member companies in promoting their business domestically and overseas¹³⁾. To this end, the Asian session with JACLaS was held, and the general exhibition JACLaS EXPO was internationalized for users from Asian countries. At the 17th ASCPaLM Congress held in Kobe, Japan, in 2022, JACLaS had co-sponsored sessions and provided a travel award for foreign scientist presenters. JSLM needs to keep to demonstrate leadership in the activities, leveraging its innovation initiative, particularly through collaboration with industry sectors.

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