

APOCP 2026 in Kuching: Turning Cancer Intelligence into Action

The 13th General Assembly and Scientific Conference of the Asian Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention (APOCP) brought the cancer control community together in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, from 28–30 September 2026. Marking 25 years of APOCP, the meeting looked firmly towards the future under the theme “Cancer Intelligence for Action: Data, Equity, and the Next 25 Years of Cancer Control in Asia-Pacific.”

Led by Professor Nirmala Bhoo-Pathy, President of APOCP and Conference Chair, together with Professor Cheng-Har Yip, Conference Co-Chair and Past President of APOCP, the meeting was conceived around a broad view of cancer control—bringing together leading voices in research, clinical care, public health, policy, health systems and advocacy, with space for genuine discussion across these boundaries.

An exceptional gathering in Kuching

The programme brought together an outstanding international and regional faculty, including Jeff Dunn AO, Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Isabelle Soerjomataram, Ophira Ginsburg, Richard Sullivan, C.S. Pramesh, Julie Gralow, Elizabeth Mittendorf, Bogda Koczwara, Jennifer Moodley, Partha Basu, Ajay Aggarwal and Nazik Hammad, among many others.

Importantly, they were not brought together simply to deliver lectures. The programme combined keynotes and scientific presentations with extended discussions on some of the difficult questions confronting cancer control: What has worked? What has not? Where should countries invest? And what must change as the region looks towards 2035?

The meeting also connected science with political leadership. YB Datuk Amar Professor Dr Sim Kui Hian, Deputy Premier of Sarawak, officiated at the opening, while YB Dato Sri Hajah Fatimah Abdullah addressed equity in cancer care.

Beyond a conventional cancer conference

Rather than being organised around individual tumour types, APOCP 2026 was structured around six interconnected themes spanning the human experience of cancer, cancer burden and priorities, prevention and early detection, universal health coverage and cancer systems, workforce and capacity, and law and policy reform.

The programme began with Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala speaking on people-powered cancer control, followed by perspectives on lived experience, women and power, systems change,

survivorship and return to work. Across the three days, discussions ranged from cervical cancer elimination and implementation science to access to treatment, financial protection, workforce, palliative care, productivity, commercial determinants of cancer and climate change.

The breadth was deliberate. Cancer control is not only about preventing cancer or developing better treatments. It is also about preventing late diagnosis, financial hardship and loss of livelihood, and ensuring that geography does not determine the chance of surviving cancer.

Partnerships for action

A defining feature of Kuching was the emphasis on partnership and practical capacity building. APOCP worked with organisations including the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC), Asian Cancer Forum, and Social Security Organisation Malaysia (PERKESO/SOCSO).

Five parallel workshops complemented the scientific programme, creating opportunities for deeper engagement in areas including implementation research, survivorship, community palliative care, work and livelihood after cancer, and approaches to measuring the wider value of cancer prevention.

Researchers and clinicians also shared the programme with policymakers, advocates, civil society and people with lived experience, while competitive abstract sessions gave students and early-career researchers a visible place alongside established leaders.

Built by a community

Behind the meeting was a core team led by Professor Nirmala Bhoo-Pathy and Professor Cheng-Har Yip, together with Dr Melissa Lim Siaw Han, Local Organising Chair; Dr Yolanda Augustin, Scientific Chair; Dr Ooi Chor Yau, Treasurer; and Sharon Choo Yoke Ling, Secretary.

APOCP extends its appreciation to the wider organising and scientific committees, partner organisations, speakers, chairs, volunteers and delegates whose generosity of time, expertise and support made the meeting possible.

Twenty-five years after APOCP was established, Kuching demonstrated the continuing value of bringing together people who might otherwise work in separate worlds—researchers and clinicians, policymakers and advocates, global institutions and local implementers, established leaders and a new generation of cancer-control professionals.

Kuching was both a celebration of APOCP's first 25 years and a call for the next: to turn cancer intelligence into action, and to ensure that progress in cancer control reaches those who need it most.