Filipino physicians shine in nuclear medicine conference in Vienna

(L-R) IMIC Awardee Dr. Barrenechea, H.E. Ambassador Maria Zeneida Angara Collinson, Dr. Quiñon, and Dr. Ongkeko.

Two Filipino physicians won awards for presenting outstanding medical research papers at the International Conference on Integrated Medical Imaging in Cardiovascular Diseases (IMIC 2016) held at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna from October 10 to 14, 2016. Dr. Angelica Barrenechea won an award for her research work and Dr. Irene Bandong received the World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology (WFNMB) Award from IAEA Deputy Director General Aldo Malavasi.
The IAEA, an international organization with a mandate to promote “atoms for development”, supports countries in using nuclear and nuclear-related techniques to fight cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and malnutrition. This is accomplished through, among others, support diagnostic imaging projects as well as support of nutrition centers and human resource development.

The IAEA organized IMIC 2016 to highlight the use of nuclear techniques to address cardiovascular diseases. The World Health Organization estimates that annual deaths due to cardiovascular diseases will reach up to more than 23 million by 2030. It is critical that appropriate management strategies be identified since the situation is particularly alarming in low and middle income countries like the Philippines. The IAEA helps countries to address this through the use of nuclear medicine techniques in both imaging and therapeutic applications, complementary to conventional techniques.

Eight Filipino physicians from different medical centers all over the Philippines attended the International Conference on Integrated Medical Imaging in Cardiovascular Diseases (IMIC 2016) held at the IAEA in Vienna: Dr. Lucille Puracan, Dr. Angelica Barrenechea, and Dr. Eduardo Erasto Ongkeko of St. Luke’s Medical Center, Dr. Mary Grace Vargas and Dr. Angelin Apostol of the Philippine Heart Center, Dr. Irene Bandong of Seamen’s Hospital, Dr. Amalia Casiño of Northern Mindanao Medical Center, and Dr. Alvin Quiñon of Capitol University Medical Center.
At the sidelines of the conference, poster review sessions were held where the participants, including the Filipino delegates, presented their respective nuclear medicine research papers to nuclear medicine experts. A total of 180 entries were evaluated and the work of the two Filipino physicians were chosen.

As early as 1966, the Philippine Society of Nuclear Medicine was formed. There are an estimated 58 nuclear medicine centers in the Philippines, 7 accredited nuclear medicine training institutions, and 95 board-certified nuclear medicine physicians. The IAEA continues to support the development of human resources in the field of Nuclear Medicine in the Philippines by organizing trainings, workshops, meetings, and conferences such as IMIC. END
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IAEA Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications Deputy Director General Aldo Malavasi (first from right) with the two Filipino IMIC Awardees: Dr. Bandong (second from left) and Dr. Barrenechea (second from right).

Philippine delegation of doctors to the IMIC 2016 with IAEA and Philippine Permanent Mission officials (L-R: Dr. Ongkeko, Dr. Bandong, Dr. Casiño, Dr. Vargas, Dr. Apostol, Dr. Thomas Pascual of the IAEA, Dr. Quiñon, Second Sec. Arumpac and Mr. Aquino of the Philippine Permanent Mission, Dr. Barrenechea, and Dr. Puracan).