

It was a pleasure to represent the Spirit Charity at the 18th Asian Spinal Cord Network Conference and 11th Annual Malaysian Rehabilitation Conference in Kuala Lumpur IN September 2019.

I had never been to either of these conferences and was unsure of what it would be like. It was one of the warmest welcoming and inclusive meetings I have ever attended and truly brought together the community of people with and professionals involved in spinal cord injury.

I am sure that the reputation Of Mr El Masri assisted greatly with the welcome- I just had to say “I’m Wagih” and doors opened!

The conference was a busy programme with support from Professor Abidin, Director of the University of Malaya Medical Centre and also political leaders from Malaysia who supported the rehabilitation service development in Kuala Lumpur and beyond.

The conference had a mixture of plenary sessions from external speakers including myself and others well known internationally in SCI. The range of topics covered by the conference extended from research to practical tips that could be instigated in any health care economy.

One continuing aspect throughout the conference was the respect for all countries in how they all provided the best care possible despite widely different economies and health spending.

As well as established professionals in SCI, the conference gave the opportunity for those in training to present work and the presentations and prizes supported by Spirit encouraged those in training and those who were from non medical backgrounds to share work and have it discussed and it was great to hear the pride and enthusiasm they all had for the work they participated in.

The conference also hosted the local spinal injury group representatives to have their conference and share in plenary sessions.

The social programme was a fitting tribute to the diversity of the conference with trainee doctors performing magic tricks to every form of Asian dancing all executed perfectly- to start with. As the evening progressed the dancing became a bit wilder and international in nature.

For me the highlight was – after I had finished, closing the conference with the ASCon Spirit Inaugural lecture. I wasn’t aware that this lecture had such an important slot but it was great to be given the opportunity to deliver the lecture and continue the theme of passion for the service and believing that the future can improve as being the most important aspect of spinal cord care no matter which country you start from.

Next year is South Korea which looks amazing though the video of the demilitarized zone wasn’t quite what I would expect on the average tourist brochure.

It was an excellent affirming opportunity for me to share with Ascon delegates what I do and to see the work done in many Asian countries and a privilege to represent SPIRIT.