

## YOUNG PHARMACISTS' SUMMIT CALLS FOR GREATER COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

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Regional delegates gathered at the Asian Young Pharmacist Group (AYPG) Leadership Summit 2017, Kuala Lumpur.

Active efforts must be made to improve cooperation among pharmacists, the communities they serve, policymakers and other stakeholders, according to a regional coalition.

“Pharmacists are healthcare professionals and not just a pill counter,” said Bryan Santos Posadas, president of the Asian Young Pharmacist Group (AYPG).

Speaking at the opening of the AYPG Leadership Summit 2017 in Kuala Lumpur recently, Posadas said that in the Philippines—as with many Asian countries—pharmacists are often perceived more as salespeople than healthcare professionals. However, he added that changing this public image would require pharmacists to make themselves more approachable, and to demonstrate more direct involvement in patient care.

“Our call, as young pharmacists, is not just to showcase our intellectual prowess, or our skills and abilities as a health professional,” said Posadas. “Our call is to touch peoples’ lives by helping them get well, prevent illness and live a healthy life.”

According to Tuan Haji Amrahi Buang, president of the Malaysia Pharmaceutical Society (MPS), community engagement can be improved by pharmacists stepping up to the forefront of community health initiatives such as antibiotic stewardship, smoking cessation and disaster response.

“It is also my opinion that the key three roles of pharmacists should benefit the community,” said Amrahi. “Number one, we are drug experts. Number two, we are guardians of medicines. And thirdly, we are healthcare solution providers.”

### **Driving further policy changes for patient safety**

Speaking at the same event, Joseph Wang, president of the Federation of Asian Pharmaceutical Associations (FAPA), said that young pharmacists needed to continue working for the improvement of pharmacy practice within their respective countries as well as across the region.

“It is important for young pharmacists to be active in addressing important issues and promote the development of the pharmacy profession,” said Wang. “More than 20 years ago, Taiwan did not have a separation of dispensing and prescribing (SDP); we lobbied for it through much demonstration and strong campaigns. Now, pharmacists and patients are able to enjoy the benefits of our hard work.”

In a recent statement issued by a 2017 FAPA forum on medication safety, it was noted that while Japan, Korea and Taiwan have integrated SDP into official healthcare policy, many Asian countries have yet to follow suit. Among the forum’s recommendations were for pharmacists to be involved in reviewing prescriptions for possible adverse drug reactions and interactions, medication counselling, and other aspects of medication safety; thus, reducing errors and standardizing the costs paid by patients for drugs.

“Do not just complain about the state of our profession; we need to work for it, and not let youth be an excuse,” said Wang. “You are working for your future, and to help sustain the efforts of past and present generations of pharmacists that have contributed to improving health outcomes through their own fields of practice.”