



REVIEW

Meeting Report: 2015 Scientific Meeting of the Pan Arab Interventional Radiology Society

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Introduction

PAIRS, an offshoot of the Pan Arab Radiology Society (PARS), was formed in 2006 by a small number of pioneering interventional radiologists in the Arabic-speaking Middle East and North Africa. PAIRS began with the mission of organizing educational activity in interventional radiology (IR), and helping to carve out its identity as a distinct subspecialty. Until 2013, the interventional radiology program was allotted a half-day within the PARS annual meetings due to small membership. However, growing interest in 2013 led then-President Mohammad Al Twalah (King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center, Riyadh, KSA) to plan the first independent PAIRS meeting.

The inaugural meeting of PAIRS in 2014 was attended by 400 delegates. At the 2015 meeting, about 1300 participants attended, including interventional radiologists, vascular surgeons, cardiologists, cardiovascular technologists, nurses and allied sciences. Participants travelled from Pakistan, India, Turkey, Iran and parts of Central Africa, in addition to the Arabic-speaking countries.

The proceedings of the inaugural session were a departure from the regional traditions. The opening ceremonies of local scientific meetings are typically filled with long speeches, mutual accolades and exchanges of gifts. The daily structure of the 2014 and 2015 PAIRS meetings consisted of a brief welcome address, followed by parallel scientific sessions throughout the day, and concluding with case discussions and hands-on workshops.

Day 1

The first day of the meeting was primarily focused on interventional oncology, with regional speakers and international faculty sharing their experiences. The highlight of the day was the plenary session on the management of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) with Dr. Jeff Geshwind (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA), a leading authority in HCC management, along with regional interventional radiologists like Dr. Mohamed Hamed (Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt)

and Dr. Asim Khwaja (Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, Abu Dhabi, UAE). In separate sessions, Dr. Mohammed Abdel Maksoud (Theodor Bilharz Research Institute, Cairo, Egypt) presented his methodology for management of difficult radio-embolization cases; Dr. Turki Al Hazmi (King Abdul-Aziz Medical City, National Guard, Mecca, KSA) presented a diagnostic imaging perspective on HCC staging and treatment; and Dr. Hossein Ghanaati (Imam Khomeini Hospital, Tehran, Iran) shared his experience of HCC and interventional oncology. The discussion session was illuminating with regards to regional ambitions to develop IR in the management of HCC, and to keep with current practice in Europe and North America.

The workshop session in the afternoon pertained to therapeutic embolization. Dr. Hamad Al Suhaibani (King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center, Riyadh, KSA) presented his experience in developing radio-embolization in the region, and Dr. Geshwind shared his experience on the same topic in the United States.

The session on peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) lines was well attended by all, including nurses and the technologists who wanted to develop a PICC line service in their institutions. Speakers noted that the adoption of PICC has generally been slow in the Middle East, partly because treating physicians are not seeking this procedure as frequently as in the West, and partly due to shortage of skilled staff. The PICC team at King Faisal Specialist Hospital reported how back-up from the IR service has increased the confidence of nurses on the clinical floors to perform PICC placements at the bedside.

Day 2

The second day of the meeting was divided into three tracks: peripheral IR, neurointerventional radiology, and separate sessions for technologists and nurses.

The scientific sessions on peripheral IR focused on the diagnosis and management of peripheral vascular disease (PVD). Speakers presented data highlighting a significantly higher prevalence of diabetes mellitus and related PVD in the Middle East compared to Western countries. Speakers also discussed the challenges associated with

late presentation of patients with PVD, and inability of primary care physicians to make early diagnosis and refer for treatment. Application of alternate treatments like herbal medicines and cautery frequently cause delay in treatment and contribute to serious complications. There was consensus among the speakers on the need to develop screening programs for early diagnosis of PVD, and increase physician and patient education on the condition. Dr. Bassel Safi (Tawam Hospital, Al Ain, UAE) shared his experience of difficulties in developing screening programs in the UAE due to the paucity of resource allocation in the public sector.

In the therapeutic embolization session, Dr. Mohamed Almoaiqel (King Abdulaziz Medical City, Riyadh, KSA) led a discussion on prostatic artery embolization. Dr. Almoaiqel reported favorable results in his cases, despite the procedure being technically very demanding. Dr. Almoaiqel also noted urologists' resistance to referring new patients for this procedure, which in turn prevents physicians from developing sufficient experience to make prostatic artery embolization a standard treatment. As more procedures are performed safely and patients learn about this minimally invasive alternative to surgery, prostatic artery embolization will likely become a widely accepted option in the management of prostatic hypertrophy. Comparison was drawn with the early days of uterine artery embolization (UAE) for fibroids and the current status of prostatic artery embolization. In the former case, patients' desire for a non-surgical procedure helped to make UAE popular and acceptable.

Neurointerventional radiology (NIR) workshops focused on management of cerebral aneurysms and arteriovenous malformations (AVM). Dr. Mahmood Razavi (St. Joseph Heart and Vascular Center, Orange, CA, USA) shared his experience with the Penumbra System for Mechanical Thrombectomy device, a useful adjunct to other methods of acute stroke management. Dr. Riad Al Okaili (King Abdulaziz Medical City, Riyadh, KSA) and Dr. Hazem Haboub (DRMS Military Hospital, Amman, Jordan) also shared their experiences with NIR management of cerebral aneurysms and dural fistulas. The presenters and the audience stressed the need to begin a regional registry, which would make it possible to learn from the cumulative results of NIR cases performed at PAIRS member institutions.

The Technologists and Allied Sciences workshops provided a forum for technologists to learn from the experiences of larger medical centers. These sessions focused on education in newer imaging technologies such as cone beam CT, in which an angiography machine collects data and reconstructs cross-sectional images for instant viewing. Further discussion covered the training of nurses and technologists in the safe use of pharmacological agents in the IR suite.

Day 3

The conference's third day was dedicated to discussion of aneurysms and venous diseases. In the sessions on aneurysms, vascular surgeons and interventional radiologists shared their team experiences in the percutaneous treatment of complex abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA). Dr. Mohamad Hamady (Imperial College London, London, UK), Dr. Fakhir El Masri (Lakeland Vascular Institute, Lakeland, FL, USA) and Dr. Fadi Haddad (American University of Beirut Medical Center, Beirut, Lebanon) presented in the first session, followed by Dr. Samer Kousayyer (King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center, Riyadh, KSA) and Dr. Saher Sabri (University of Virginia Health System, Charlottesville, VA, USA) in the second session. Dr. Ayman Al-Sibaie (Rashid Hospital, Dubai, UAE) discussed device selection in the percutaneous treatment of AAA, the introduction of newer CHIMPS and Sandwich endovascular grafts devices, and the use of robotics in vascular interventional techniques. Dr. Hammady also showed video demonstrating the advantages of robotics in difficult cannulations as part of AAA management.

The session on venous disease focused primarily on peripheral AVM, with Dr. Ahmad Al Omari (Boston Children's Hospital,

Boston, MA, USA) and Dr. Mohammad Badran (King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center, Riyadh, KSA) sharing their techniques and experience with complex AVM. Dr. Mahmood Razavi (St. Joseph Heart and Vascular Center, Orange, CA, USA) also highlighted the need for and utility of early intervention in deep vein thrombosis (DVT) to prevent complications.

In addition to educational sessions, the meeting featured equipment exhibition by manufacturers from around the world. Local agents were on hand to receive orders for equipment and consumables. Their presence highlighted the ease with which IR suites needs can be filled locally and quickly.

Another new feature at this meeting was the working lunch session. Providing a lunch box to participants allowed for a change of pace from the formerly sumptuous, drawn-out lunches. However, the annual dinner was a well-planned and elaborate affair, and provided a good opportunity for attendees from different countries to interact and share thoughts in a relaxed atmosphere.

At the concluding sessions, it was announced that the next PAIRS annual scientific meeting will be held March 9-12, 2016 in Dubai. Prior to then, the PAIRS team plans to host regional workshops during the year, and to partner with European societies for a combined session in North Africa.

Further information about PAIRS and its Annual Scientific Meeting can be found at www.pairs2015.com and www.pairsweb.com. □