MALAYSIAN SOCIETY OF GASTROENTEROLOGY & HEPATOLOGY

VOL 1 - MARCH 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



May I wish our Muslim members Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Fitri and happy holidays.

As we embark on another exciting year, I am thrilled to welcome you to the first edition of the MSGH Bulletin for 2025.

Our Society continues to grow, reflecting the dedication and passion of our members in advancing the fields of gastroenterology and hepatology.

This edition highlights not only the latest developments in our specialty but also the inspiring journeys of our colleagues, showcasing their commitment to clinical excellence, research, and education.

We also extend our warmest congratulations to Dr Muhammad Firdaus bin Md Salleh on his appointment as the National Head of Service for Gastroenterology and Hepatology. His leadership and vision will undoubtedly strengthen our field, and we look forward to ongoing collaborative efforts in training, research, and improving patient care.

The introduction of innovative techniques such as EndoscopicSleeveGastroplasty(ESG)andthecontinued emphasis on hepatology and motility disorders are testaments to the rapid progress in our specialty. It is through these collective efforts that we can push boundaries and ensure better outcomes for our patients.

I encourage all members to engage with MSGH's activities, be it through conferences, training workshops, or knowledge-sharing sessions. Your participation is vital in shaping the future of our specialty. Let us continue to uphold our commitment to excellence, mentorship, and patient-centred care.

Wishing everyone a fulfilling and successful year ahead!

May I wish our Muslim members Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Fitri and happy holidays.

Datuk Dr Raman Muthukaruppan



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Happy 2025 everyone! Welcome to our first issue of the bulletin of the year. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr Nik Razima for her fantastic work as Editor. She has certainly set a high bar, and I am honoured to be given this opportunity to step into her very difficult-to-fill-shoes.

Three months into the year and much has happened! In this issue, we are pleased to introduce Dr Muhammad Firdaus bin Md Salleh as the newly appointed National Head of Service for Gastroenterology and Hepatology, who shares his vision and goals for our subspecialty.

Our popular 'A Fellow's Journey' column takes a unique turn, with Dr Lew Ken Guan not only recounting his overseas fellowship experience, but also offering a thoughtful reflection on his fouryear journey as a gastroenterology fellow and his passion for neurogastroenterology. Meanwhile, Dr Leung Hak Keith shares his keen interest for hepatology in a dedicated piece.

Finally, with the rising prevalence of obesity, bariatric-related procedures are gaining traction, and Dr Sattian Kollanthavelu provides an in-depth look at his experience performing ESGs and a TORe. We hope you enjoy this issue and check out the list of future events! If you would like to share your experience, insights and hosted events, feel free to reach out to us at secretariat@msgh.org.my

Selamat Hari Raya to all celebrating – wishing everyone safe travels and cherished moments with loved ones!

Enjoy! Su Yin

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LOOKING AHEAD: STRENGTHENING OUR GASTROENTEROLOGY & HEPATOLOGY COMMUNITY

Dr Muhammad Firdaus bin Md Salleh Consultant Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist, Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor Bahru

Dear Colleagues,

It is a privilege to introduce myself as the current Head of Service in Gastroenterology and Hepatology of the Ministry of Health Malaysia. Stepping into this role, I am truly honoured and excited to serve alongside such a dedicated and skilled team and colleagues. As our field continues to evolve rapidly, so too does our responsibility to adapt, innovate, and elevate the standards of care for our patients.

Looking ahead, I envision a future where collaboration, education, training, and research take centre stage. Strengthening ties between institutions; both public and private, across the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), fostering mentorship for younger specialists, and driving advancements in clinical practice are key priorities. Additionally, we must embrace new technologies and treatment paradigms to ensure we remain at the forefront of patient care.

I look forward to working with each of you to further our shared mission. Together, we can continue to build a dynamic and progressive gastroenterology and hepatology community.

Thank you for your trust and support. I am eager for the journey ahead!

Best regards, Firdaus Salleh

A FELLOW'S JOURNEY

Dr Lew Ken Guan Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan Kuantan, Pahang

I still remember my early days as a general physician, often hearing the question, "What will you specialize in?" I had no definite answer until one fateful day when I decided to pursue gastroenterology.

It was entirely based on gut feeling - quite literally. Do I regret my decision? After four years of rigorous training, I can confidently say that I am fortunate to have chosen this path. Not only do I find it fulfilling, but I am also deeply immersed in it. Entering the fellowship programme brought a sense of belonging and set me on a new path of learning and discovery.



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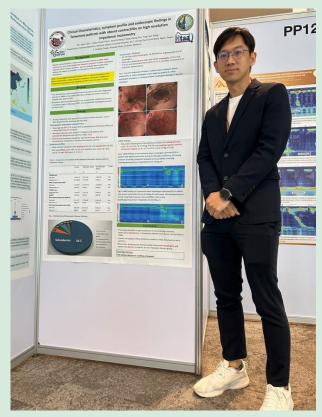
In our local gastroenterology and hepatology training, we undergo four years of structured training, including one year overseas. Each year, we rotate between different training centres, a process that comes with many considerations. Beyond training and work, family plays a crucial role in our decisions. Many of us pray to be placed near our loved ones, but luck does not always favour us. In my case, I had to be apart from my children for two years, only seeing them during leave. The challenges were further compounded by the curfew restrictions during the COVID-19 era, which tested our work-life balance.

At the beginning of training, one must adapt to new clinical responsibilities, stay updated with guidelines, and refine endoscopy skills. Additionally, we are expected to give CME presentations, attend workshops, and participate in conferences.

One of the biggest challenges was preparing for the ESEGH examination while managing a full workload. I was never the brightest candidate, and passing the exam was an uphill battle. I recall waking up early to study before work and staying back to revise while waiting for the evening traffic to ease in the Klang Valley. Success did not come easy for me, but persistence paid off.

Procedural learning follows a structured path. In the first year, fellows start with basic OGD. In the second year, they are introduced to colonoscopy and gain initial exposure to EUS. The third year is the most demanding, requiring fellows to balance increased responsibilities with exam preparation. Colonoscopy is particularly challenging to master and, at one point, I doubted whether I would ever get it right after multiple failed attempts. I saw peers who picked it up quickly, but I struggled. Fortunately, I had excellent mentors who provided guidance, and training in a high-volume centre exposed me to a variety of cases. On-call duties were exhausting yet exhilarating and rewarding.

For those curious about the exam, many wonder: How do you pass? What are the best



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strategies? Personally, I recommend becoming familiar with Sleisenger and Fordtran's GI and Liver Disease: Review and Assessment, along with relevant guidelines. Mastering radiology images and motility testing is essential. Make your study material repeatable and exam-oriented. Focus on details and anticipate likely topics. Online MRCP sample questions also help. My study method may not be the best for everyone, but I encourage others to find what works for them. A busy work schedule is not an excuse - with consistency, faith, and hard work, success is achievable.

I chose neurogastroenterology and motility as my subspecialty. Why? Because these disorders are often overlooked, and many physicians try to avoid such cases due to their complexity. However, I was drawn to the challenge of finding solutions for patients suffering from these conditions. Initially, I was hesitant about going abroad for further training, mainly due to concerns about being away from my family again. But after much deliberation, I decided to take the leap. It was an opportunity to broaden my perspective, experience a new culture and work environment, and connect with mentors and colleagues.



My final year of training was incredibly rewarding. Beyond clinical exposure, I gained experience in research, academic writing, and presentations. I have no regrets about my decision. What once seemed like a mystery - motility testing and neurogastrointestinal disorders eventually became second nature. Compared to general gastroenterology, I now have deeper insights into these conditions. For example, few realise that excessive belching is a treatable disorder.

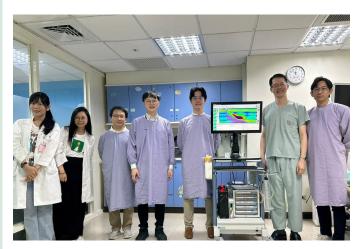
Was it difficult to master new skills? Initially, yes. I vividly remember struggling with my first few motility studies, unsure of how to interpret the complex tracings. My mentor patiently guided me through case-after-case, explaining the nuances and teaching me to recognise subtle abnormalities. With time and practice, what once seemed like an insurmountable challenge became second nature. Overseas training at the National University Hospital Taiwan, provided me with more freedom to focus on the subject without the constraints of clinical duties. The hands-on experience with functional and motility disorders was invaluable. Subspecialty training truly enhances disease management and patient care.

In the blink of an eye, my four-year fellowship has come to an end. Time flies. My advice to future fellows: seize every learning opportunity, embrace the hardships, and don't fear making mistakes. You will thank yourself in the future. Exams are just one part of the journey - consistency will yield fruitful results. Choose a subspecialty you are passionate about, and you will enjoy the learning process. Unlike many of my peers who pursued EUS and ERCP, I followed a less conventional path. Neurogastroenterology and motility are often overlooked, and resources are still limited. However, I believe this field has immense potential and, one day, our country will be better equipped.

I am now taking small steps to establish a motility service in the East Coast. This includes advocating for funding, collaborating with hospital administrators, and seeking partnerships to acquire the necessary equipment. Additionally, I am working on increasing awareness among healthcare professionals about the importance of motility disorders and training interested colleagues in basic motility testing techniques. It is a challenging endeavour due to funding constraints and the lack of equipment. But I remain hopeful that this will change with time. I envision a future where we have more experts in neurogastroenterology and a well-established national society, just like in other countries.

This journey has been incredibly fulfilling. It has reinforced my belief in the importance of perseverance, mentorship, and continuous learning. As I move forward, I hope to inspire future generations of gastroenterologists to explore the field of neurogastroenterology and motility.

The challenges may be great, but the opportunity to improve patients' lives makes it all worthwhile. It has provided me with new insights and skills. I may not be the first in this field, but I believe I can make meaningful contributions to society. Looking back, I can confidently say - this was all worth it.



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BEYOND THE SURFACE: DISCOVERING THE DEPTH AND REWARD OF HEPATOLOGY

Dr Leung Hak Keith

Gastroenterology Trainee, UMMC

Hepatology, a subspecialty of gastroenterology, focuses on the study, diagnosis, and management of liver diseases and plays a crucial role in overall health. Liver diseases, including cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma, are significant global health concerns.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), liver diseases account for a substantial number of deaths worldwide, with cirrhosis being a leading cause of morbidity. The rising prevalence of metabolic dysfunctionassociated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), viral hepatitis, and alcohol-related liver disease underscores the need for improved screening, prevention, and management strategies.

Liver cirrhosis represents the end stage of chronic liver disease, where excessive scarring disrupts normal liver function. In the early stages, patients remain compensated, meaning their liver can still perform essential functions. However, once complications such as ascites, variceal bleeding, hepatic encephalopathy, or jaundice develop, the condition is classified as decompensated cirrhosis. This stage carries high morbidity and mortality, making early intervention critical. Given the complexity of decompensated cirrhosis, ongoing research and expert discussions are essential to improving patient outcomes.

The Hepatology Series 2025 served as a vital platform for clinicians, researchers, and trainees to explore the latest advancements in managing decompensated liver disease. By bringing together leading experts, this event fostered collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and the development of evidence-based treatment strategies.

Event Overview

The event was structured into two key components: a keynote lecture by renowned hepatology experts and case-based discussions exploring real-world clinical scenarios. Held in an interactive and engaging format, the session provided participants with evidencebased strategies for managing liver cirrhosis - from the prevention of first decompensation to advanced therapeutic options for decompensated disease.

The event brought together leading specialists, including Dr Ruveena Bhavani Rajaram, Dr. Hoo Chai Zhen, Dr Lau Su Yin, and Dr Tan Soek Siam, each of whom shared his/her expertise on different aspects of cirrhosis management.

Key Themes and Speaker Highlights

- **Dr.Ruveena Bhavani Rajaram:** Delivered an insightful session on Baveno VII, the latest update in consensus recommendations for managing portal hypertension and variceal bleeding in cirrhosis. She highlighted key changes in risk stratification, non-invasive assessments, and treatment algorithms aimed at preventing decompensation.
- Dr Hoo Chai Zhen: Spoke on the diagnosis and management of hepatorenal syndrome, a life-threatening complication of decompensated cirrhosis. She outlined a stepwise approach to early recognition and treatment, emphasizing the role of vasoconstrictors and albumin therapy.
- Dr Lau Su Yin: Addressed the significance of quality indicators (QIs) in cirrhosis management, emphasising that standardised care protocols improve patient outcomes. She presented recent data on QIs and their impact on reducing hospital readmissions and improving long-term survival.
- **Dr Tan Soek Siam:** Discussed the palliative approach in end-stage liver disease (ESLD). She highlighted the challenges of managing ESLD and stressed the importance of integrating palliative care into hepatology to improve symptom management and patient quality of life.

The case-based discussions provided invaluable insights into complex hepatology cases. One case examined the role of pre-emptive TIPS in decompensated





Dr Tan Soek Siam on Palliative approaches in End-stage liver disease



Case based discussion



Dr Ruveena on Portal hypertension and decompensated cirrhosis



Dr Hoo Chai Zhen on Renal Dysfunction in Cirrhosis

cirrhosis, emphasising patient selection, procedural considerations and post-TIPS management, in line with Baveno VII recommendations. Another case focused on MASLD cirrhosis, exploring alternative therapeutic approaches such as ursodeoxycholic acid and vitamin E.

Personal Reflection as a Gastroenterology Trainee

As a gastroenterology trainee with a keen interest in hepatology, attending Hepatology Series 2025 was an enriching experience. Hepatology is often perceived as an unseen, tedious, and even 'boring' aspect of gastroenterology, overshadowed by the more 'exciting' procedural aspects like endoscopy and interventional techniques. However, beneath the surface lies a deeply complex and intellectually stimulating field requiring clinical expertise, evidence-based decision-making, and long-term patient management strategies.

One of the most striking aspects of hepatology is its multidisciplinary nature. Managing decompensated liver cirrhosis isn't just about treating liver disease - it involves cardiology, nephrology, infectious diseases, critical care, and even palliative medicine. The case discussions during this event highlighted this complexity, especially regarding pre-emptive TIPS placement and the emerging role of metabolic therapies in MASLD cirrhosis. These discussions reinforced the importance of personalized treatment approaches rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy.

What makes hepatology truly rewarding, in my experience, is its longitudinal patient care. Unlike other areas of gastroenterology where procedures may offer immediate results, hepatology requires a patient-centred approach, focusing on preventing decompensation, managing complications, and improving quality of life. Witnessing a patient's condition stabilise after optimising therapy or successfully bridging them to liver transplantation is one of the most fulfilling aspects of this field. This event also reminded me that learning in hepatology is a continuous journey. Guidelines like Baveno VII, emerging therapies in MASLD, and newer approaches in hepatorenal syndrome are constantly evolving, requiring lifelong learning and adaptability.

As a trainee, having the opportunity to learn directly from renowned experts provided valuable insights that will shape my clinical practice.

PIONEERING ENDOSCOPIC SLEEVE GASTROPLASTY (ESG) IN MALAYSIA: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

Dr Sattian Kollanthavelu Consultant Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist Mawar Medical Centre, Seremban, Negri Sembilan



The Beginning of an ESG Journey

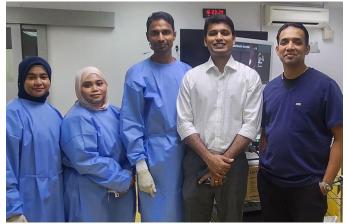
My journey with ESG began in 2018 when I first encountered discussions about its feasibility during medical training.

At that time, ESG remained unavailable in Malaysia due to the lack of an approved endoscopic suturing device. However, the concept of offering a minimally invasive weight loss option without surgery remained at the back of my mind.

Fast forward to 2023, with the long-awaited registration of the necessary suturing device, ESG was finally within reach. The prospect of bringing this procedure to Malaysia became a reality, reigniting my interest and prompting me to pursue formal training.

Training and Hands-On Experience

Exposure to ESG techniques began during the Universiti Malaya Endoscopy Workshop in May 2024, where I had the opportunity to learn from Dr Ravishankar Asokkumar, a senior consultant Gastroenterologist and AdvancedTherapeutic Endoscopist at Singapore General Hospital, where he introduced the second-generation suturing device. This was followed by a hands-on



With Proctor Dr Ravishankar Asokkumar, Dr James Emmanuel and the endoscopy team

workshop utilising an animal model in December 2024 using the newer generation of Overstitch NXT Endoscopic Suturing Device, further reinforcing the skills necessary to transition ESG into clinical practice.

Proctorship Programme

To ensure safe and structured patient care, a collaborative effort was established to introduce ESG through a formal proctorship programme. Under the guidance of Dr Ravishankar Asokkumar, I performed the first formal ESG procedures on 17th & 18th January 2025, with five patients successfully undergoing the procedure. All patients were discharged in good condition and were able to resume daily activities within a few days, following necessary dietary adjustments. Their progress was closely monitored over the following month.

Building a Multidisciplinary Team

ESG is more than just a procedural milestone – it requires a multidisciplinary team to ensure the best patient outcomes, and I was fortunate to work alongside an excellent team, Dr Deviga Lachumanan, our endocrinologist; Dr Lim Joo May, our anaesthetist; Ms Khu Yee Teng, our dietitian; and not to forget the GI endoscopy assistants.

Patient Outcomes and Reflections

At six weeks post-procedure, my patients showed meaningful weight loss, with a mean weight reduction of 10.34kg (10.06% total body weight). More importantly, there were no complications in these patients.

Expanding Expertise: Bariatric Revision with TORe

Following the successful implementation of ESG, my focus shifted to bariatric revision procedures, particularly Transoral Outlet Reduction (TORe). This procedure is intended for patients experiencing weight regain after gastric bypass. On 14th March 2025, I performed my first TORe under the guidance of Dr Amy (ChiaChia) Liu,





Performing my first TORe

Bariatric Endoscopist, Obesity Medicine Doctor, and Dean of the Weight Loss Center at New Delight Medical Centre, Taiwan. This marked yet another milestone and the patient was discharged well.

Future Prospects of ESG in Malaysia

ESG is gaining recognition as a safe, effective, and minimally invasive alternative to traditional bariatric surgery. With rising obesity rates, ESG presents an option that:

- reduces surgical risks associated with conventional procedures
- allows for quicker recovery times
- expands accessibility as it can be performed in outpatient settings
- provides an option for patients who do not qualify for surgery but require medical intervention

Conclusion

The successful execution of ESG and TORe represents a significant step forward in advancing minimally invasive weight-loss procedures in Malaysia.

Despite being introduced in a non-academic setting, the outcomes demonstrate that such innovative techniques can be safely and effectively performed.

The journey to bringing ESG and TORe to Malaysia has been fulfilling. With continued learning, collaboration, and patient-centred care, I am confident that these procedures will play an important role in the future of bariatric endoscopy.



The team that performed the first TORe procedure in Malaysia, with Dr Lee Tiong See, Dr Amy Liu and the endoscopy team



THEME: BACK TO THE BEGINNING: GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START



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Govind Makharia New Delhi



Singapore



🖂 secretariat@msgh.org.my/apage@apage.org (+603 8800 0779

International Faculty



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🖂 secretariat@msgh.org.my/apage@apage.org (🕻 +603 8800 0779



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Ennaliza Salazar Singapore



TIPS & TRICKS TO ACE THE ESEGH – A VALUABLE LEARNING SESSION

Dr Syuhada Dan Adnan Gastroenterology and Hepatology CME Subcommittee Chair

On 25th February 2025, the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Training Committee of the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology (MSGH), hosted an insightful webinar on strategies to excel in the ESEGH exam.

The session was expertly moderated by Dr Lau Su Yin, ensuring a smooth and engaging discussion.

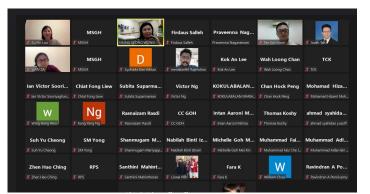
Dr Muhammad Firdaus bin Md Salleh, MOH Gastroenterology and Hepatology Head, opened the session with practical advice for ESEGH trainees.

Dr Wong Mung Seong highlighted common mistakes candidates made and shared strategies for taking the exam from home. Dr. Wan Zaharatul provided an overview of key resources available for preparation.

Dr Praveena Nagaratnam and Dr Tan Kar Choon wrapped up the session with valuable tips, tricks, and personal experiences. The event was a resounding success, with 51 participants actively engaging in the session.

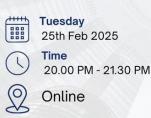
We would like to wish all ESEGH candidates the best of luck - may you pass with flying colours!







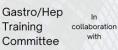
TIPS & TRICKS ON HOW TO ACE THE ESEGH!



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TO REGISTER





Mung Seong HSAAS, University Putra Malaysia

Dr Praveena Nagaratnam HKL

Dr Tan Kar Choon H Selayang

Dr Wan Zaharatul H Putrajaya

2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL					
03 - 05	ESGE Days, Barcelona, Spain				
19	World Liver Day				
19	World IBS Day				

MAY				
03 - 06	DDW, San Diego, CA, USA			
07 - 10	EASL Congress, Amsterdam, Netherlands			
16 - 17	APAGE Clinical Forum on IBD, Penang, Malaysia			
19	World IBD Day			
28 - 31	International Congress of ILTS, Singapore			
29	WORLD Digestive Health Day			

JUNE				
06	World Transplant Day			
12 - 14	IDEN, Seoul, Korea			
JULY				
10 - 12	6th Scientific Meeting of SEAGMA, Penang			
10 - 12	13th Annual Meeting of AOCC, Chiba, Japan			
28	World Hepatitis Day			

AUGUST				
08 - 10	GUT 2025 in conjunction with Endoscopy Workshop 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia			
22 - 24	Asian Hepatology Summit, Singapore			





Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology

2025 GU

Annual Scientific Meeting of MSGH

8th to 10th August 2025 Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

in conjunction with Endoscopy Workshop 2025



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CONGRESS SECRETARIAT

Unit 3.8, Level 3, Medical Academies Malaysia Building No. 5, Jalan Kepimpinan P8H, Presint 8, 62250 Putrajaya, Malaysia **Tel:** +603 8800 0779, 8800 0000, 8861 8585 **Email:** secretariat@msgh.org.my **Website:** www.msgh.org.my