

The Recent Fifteen Years of JAFES (2010–2025): Places We Visited, Pathways We Blazed, and Networks We Multiplied



November 2025 will be remembered in a special way: a moment when we got to look back to the recent fifteen years, look in, and look forward again to the future.

The ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (AFES) is an organization that has always been close to our hearts at the Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism or PSEM (later Philippine Society of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Endocrinology or PSEDM; and currently Philippine College of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism or PCEDM). Filipino endocrinologists have been active participants in AFES from the time of the founding in 1981, with our own founding member Dr. Augusto D. Litonjua. My active involvement as Immediate Past President of the PSEM in 2002 was marked by the launch of a commemorative coffee-table book during 12th AFES meeting in Singapore in 2003, entitled *AFES 1981-2003: Renewing our Commitment to the ASEAN Region* (Figure 1). Through then AFES President and the Endocrine and Metabolic Society of Singapore President Dr. Daphne Khoo, we shared this special historical token at that meeting.¹ It was a sentimental display of the strengths of each of the member organizations and a welcome to new member Vietnam, under the leadership of Professor Mai The Trach, Founding Member and then First Vice-President, Vietnam Association of Diabetes and Endocrinology, the first new member since the inception of the AFES.

How did JAFES get launched?

In the commemorative book in 2003, Malaysian founding member Professor Dato' Dr. Mustafa Embong detailed how JAFES was planned early on in 1981 and was first published in 1982 with articles sourced from the first AFES Congress. He wrote, "JAFES was one initiative taken by the Federation to promote exchange of knowledge among members and to provide a platform to encourage young ASEAN endocrinologists to undertake research and publish findings." As Editor-in-Chief since 1997, in 2003 he reported further: "... While financial constraint is an issue, the bigger challenge is to ensure that JAFES is published regularly and on time. ... We face two major problems: lack of articles and lack of reviewers. Many have complained that they are not keen to submit articles to JAFES because it is not in the *Index Medicus*. It is really a catch-22 situation... Perhaps it is time to pass the baton."

It came to pass in 2010 that AFES offered the Philippines to host the next editorial group of JAFES, with yours truly as the next Editor-in-Chief. Now as we revisit those recent fifteen years beginning 2010, we ask: "Has JAFES made a difference in our patients' lives?"

What were the places we visited in the recent 15 years?

With increasing rates of Diabetes Mellitus in the region, over the past 15 years, indeed nearly 40% of the articles focused on DM. Our opening issue in 2011 featured national Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) for DM from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore. Research through the years focused on prevalence, genetic associations, complications and management strategies. Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) was also a significant concern, with CPGs for diabetes in pregnancy from Indonesia and Myanmar, and studies on diagnostic markers and maternal/neonatal outcomes.²

Rising rates of obesity and metabolic syndrome led to 11% of the articles, including CPGs on obesity from Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Indonesia. The "double burden of malnutrition in Asia" is specifically mentioned as a phenomenon that should not be dismissed.

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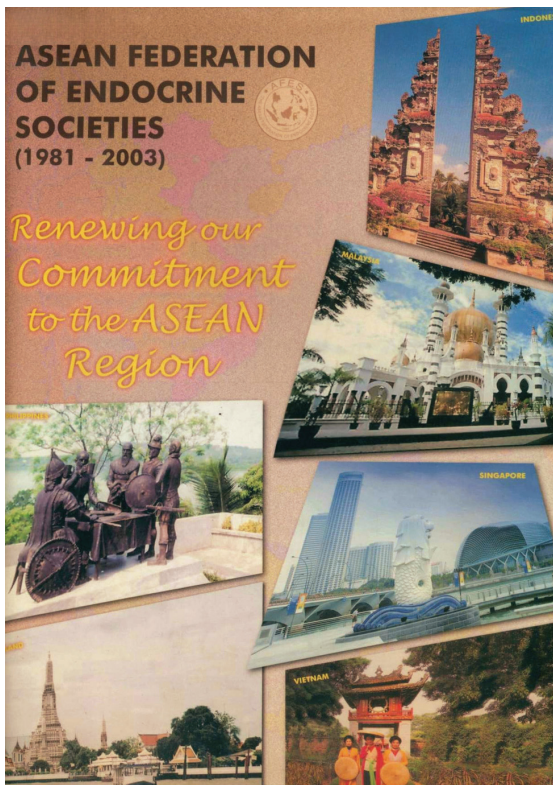


Figure 1. Cover of the 12th AFES Commemorative Book: ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (1981–2003): Renewing Commitment to the ASEAN Region. Singapore; 2003.

Thyroid disorders comprise another huge endocrine problem in the region, accounting for 19% of the publications. National CPGs for thyroid disorders have been reported for hyperthyroidism in Indonesia, general management in Malaysia, disorders of thyroid function in Myanmar, and well-differentiated thyroid carcinoma in the Philippines.

Other major topics of articles include osteoporosis and bone disease, and dyslipidemia.

JAFES also went into less-explored territories of research gaps and emerging ideas: (1) impact of COVID-19 on endocrine disorders; (2) molecular, genetic, and precision medicine approaches; (3) digital health, telemedicine, and AI in endocrinology; (4) novel therapeutic and diagnostic modalities; (5) psychosocial aspects, quality of life, and patient-centered care; (6) enhancement of diagnostic and management guidelines and protocols; and similar areas that cut across multiple endocrine dysfunctions.

Yes, time and again we have been reminded in JAFES of many oft-forgotten challenges, which we can only overcome if there were genuine exchange of knowledge and regional collaboration and cooperation on endocrine issues. We need to continue pushing forward on such areas of concern as: (1) persistent public health issues; (2) implementation and adherence challenges; (3) need for culturally and linguistically validated tools; (4) addressing specific diabetes complications; (5) pediatric and young-onset endocrine issues; (6) understanding and managing rare or complex cases; or (7) addressing environmental and lifestyle factors.

What were the pathways that we blazed?

JAFES encouraged various ways of reporting on the endocrine research and practice, the better to cater to our mix of researchers, authors, and readers.

Publications from original work of authors in the region comprised 45% of the articles published, with case reports representing another 34%. As much as randomized controlled studies and analytical works provide greater evidence, we did find value in reporting uncommon cases from the region too. In one editorial we even wrote, “the case for case report.” Those rare or differentially presented cases were a great source of learning as well.

We were one of the first to do visual abstracts to disseminate information from articles published both for the scientific community and for the lay, shouting out from social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

And in the process have we helped multiply the networks that the AFES set out to create since 1981?

Fundamentally, we worked on enhancing JAFES as the platform for advancing endocrine research in the ASEAN region, to be a voice of endocrinology in the region. Most submissions, particularly coming from non-English speaking countries that had difficulty getting acceptance in international journals, were nurtured by our peer reviewers and editors who assisted in transforming good ideas towards meaningful statements and reports. We championed the dissemination of clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) tailored for the Region for various topics, to understand our similarities and differences and to be a platform for not just learning from each other but also be an impetus to help each other.

We promoted and practiced open access to scientific information. Open access allowed every reader – researcher, practitioner or patient – a link to a full text of the article with no charges. Authors were able to submit and publish without major concern for financial cost.

We did all that while making JAFES recognized in the most important online scientific indices and full-text archives like PubMed Central (which essentially replaced the role of in-print *Index Medicus* that was already discontinued in 2004), the better for our ASEAN work to be known – and referenced – not only in the ASEAN region but throughout the world.

The JAFES Editorial Team

2011 to present



Past Members

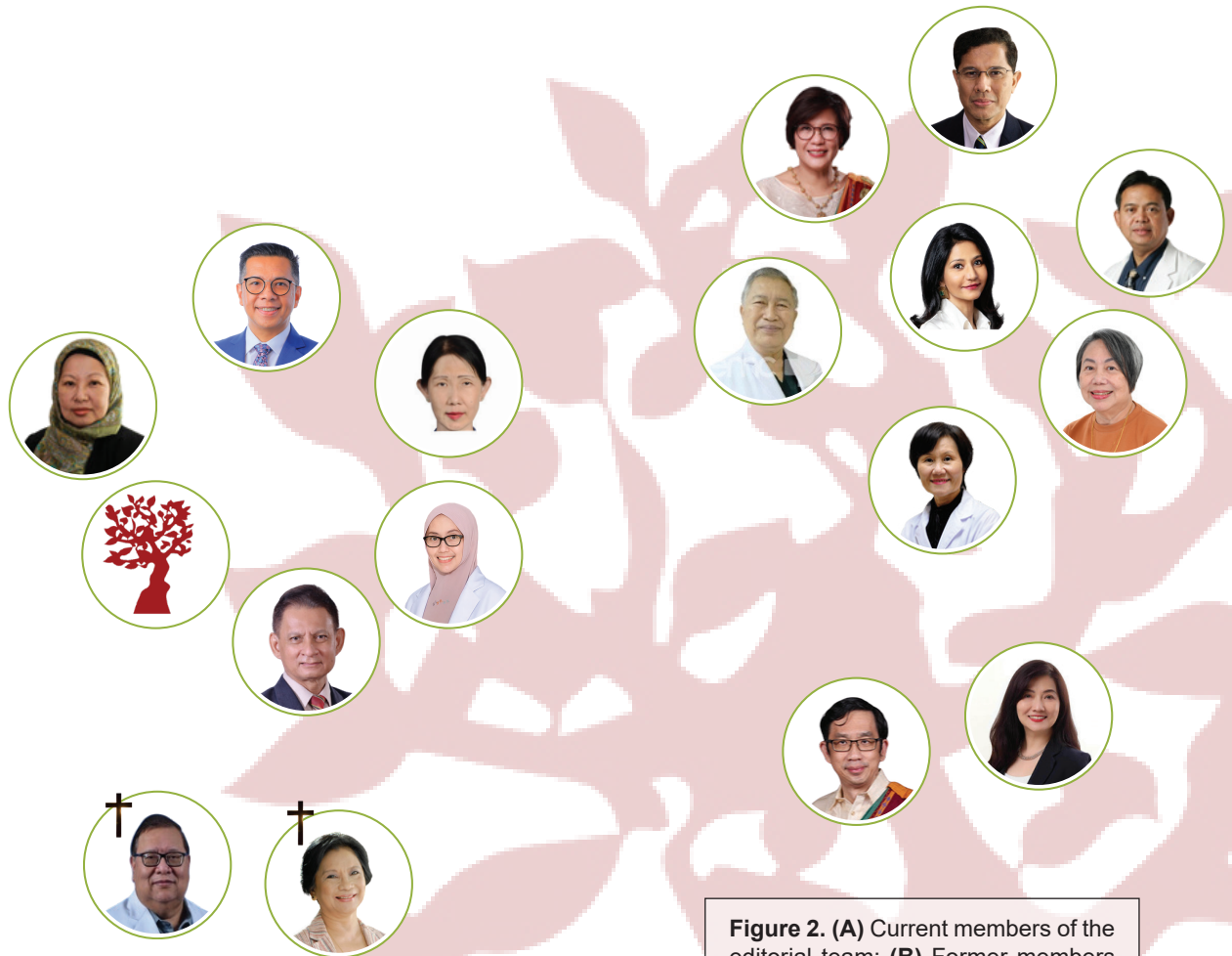


Figure 2. (A) Current members of the editorial team; **(B)** Former members of the editorial team.

Our Clarivate Journal Impact Factor (JIF) now puts JAFES on the map, ensuring appropriate citations for our articles, and from here we can only expand our reach — better for our patients to access and for us, as healthcare providers, to deliver the most regionally appropriate care in endocrinology.

So indeed, it has been a full circle moment, too. I had the privilege to speak at the Diabetes Asia Conference 2025 led by Prof Mustaffa Embong in October 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. On behalf of the JAFES Editorial Team (Figure 2), I personally shared with him these successes of JAFES through the years of careful learnings and overcoming challenges.

This November, all our Societies gather in Vietnam (Da Nang) for the 2025 AFES, where we continue to collaborate in foreseeing better futures for JAFES as well, with our next Editor-in-Chief.

The vision to deliver an ASEAN perspective for patient care lives on. The journey endures; as we say it from the Philippines: *Mabuhay!* (Long live!) AFES and JAFES. And to all who have contributed to these efforts, *Salamat po* (Thank you).

Elizabeth Paz-Pacheco
Editor-in-Chief

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