

Special Report: Asian Young Dietitian Network

Introduction of AYDN activities: Participation at the Thai Dietetic Association Conference

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Thai Dietetic Association (TDA) held the annual conference on April 28th-30th 2024 at Bangkok, Thailand, marking TDA's 50th anniversary, was a special event themed "Application of Diet Therapy into Lifestyle Medicine: What We Should Know." It provided an excellent opportunity for engagement with leading dietitian practitioners and academics. The

conference was attended by representatives from Thailand's Health Ministry, the Asian Federation of Dietetic Associations, the Japan Dietetic Association, and dietitian representatives from various Asian countries. The Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) had the honor to be invited in this important event for TDA.



Fig 1. Photo of AYDN members at the Thai Dietetic Association Annual Conference 2024

The AYDN is a group of young dietitians from various Asian countries pledged to work collaboratively to enhance the status of dietitians in each country and the recognition of societies towards dietitians' careers. The network was established following the workshop "Let's Talk about the Future of Young Dietitians in Asia" at the Asian Congress of Dietetics in Yokohama, Japan, in 2022. With concern about the future of dietitians, Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto from Jumonji University yearns to establish a core group of dietitians and nurture them to become the future leaders of dietitians in the region. With the support of Ajinomoto Co., Inc., on December 1, 2023,

a successful kick-off meeting was held in Tokyo, Japan, which brought 20 dietitians from 12 Asian countries. In the meeting, all members of AYDN agreed to work towards the three main objectives: 1) Sharing information and experiences about participants' country nutritional issues and experiences they have which could contribute to other participants, 2) Conducting researches and publish them to an academic journal (such as Asian Journal of Dietetics) to increase skills in investigation and research to find the problems and solutions in a logical thinking. 3) Carry out webinars and workshops to increase scientific and non-scientific knowledge.

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In 2024, a total of 21 AYDN members participated in the TDA conference. They were from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. AYDN members, dressed in their traditional clothing, showcased their cultural heritage, unified in their goal to advance dietetics.

In the opening ceremony, Prof. Chanida Pachotikarn from Mahidol University and president of the Thai Dietetic Association, delivered the presidential speech, emphasizing the importance of updated nutrition education and the future of dietitians. On the other hand, various organizations and institutes presented research awards to encourage more research in the dietetic field. Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto's guest lecture on "What Dietitians Need for the Future: Evidence-based Dietetics" highlighted the use of technology and creative cooking in daily practice, urging dietitians to publish more researches, especially for those who work in hospital. The challenge is not easy, however, it is a way to enhance the respect dietitians work.

Goal of AYDN symposium

The 50th anniversary of the TDA marked a significant milestone with the symposium section held by the AYDN, themed "Exploring the Landscape of Nutrition and Dietetic Training Program: A Comprehensive Study Among Asian Young Dietitians Network Member Countries." The symposium commenced with Ms. Nguyen Thu Trang from Vietnam and Ms. Andrea Wakita (Ajinomoto Co., Inc.) introducing the establishment of AYDN and unveiling the annual plan for 2024 to 2026. Esteemed speakers, including Mr. George from Malaysia, Mr. Tzu Yun Cha from Taiwan, and Mr. Prem Kumar from Bhutan, highlighted the symposium's three primary objectives: assessing the diversity of curriculums and educational

pathways, examining practical training opportunities for nutrition and dietetics students, and identifying strengths and areas for improvement in AYDN member countries' degree programs to become a registered dietitian. With the presence of several senior Asian dietitians at the conference, AYDN successfully communicated its mission to the participating young dietitians and garnered valuable insights and support from senior dietitians regarding the budding AYDN network.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of AYDN, we express our deepest gratitude to TDA for the invitation and kind hospitality. We are thankful for the opportunity to present our research at such a significant event. Our appreciation extends to Professor Shigeru Yamamoto of Jumonji University for his long cherished dream, vision and dedication, which made our participation possible. We also thank Jumonji University for their support and Ajinomoto Co., Inc. for their sponsorship, enabling such as our face-to-face meeting at the TDA conference. This support is vital for our growth, and we are committed to continue our collaboration to reach the goals of the network.

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Report (Bangladesh) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

AYDN was established on December 1, 2023 with the general objective to elevate the status of Dietitians in Asian countries. We desire for such a society where people will trust dietitians, recognize, and respect their roles. To achieve that goal we have to take proper initiatives, our gathering in Thailand was a step towards the goal. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to TDA for inviting us in their remarkable 50th anniversary. It was a great opportunity to meet, greet

and exchange ideas among young dietitians of 11 Asian countries under the umbrella of AYDN. We also got the rare opportunity to receive the affection and valuable directions from the respected mentors and senior Dietitians.

We also express our sincere gratitude to Professor Yamamoto for establishing AYDN and nurturing us towards success and honor. Moreover, our heartfelt gratitude goes to Ajinomoto Company for sponsoring us which is crucial for our development and growth.



Fig 1. Introducing ourselves and sharing Greetings to TDA members and participants (Tapati Saha: Left, Sumaya Islam: Right)

Personal Reflections

The warm hospitality and generosity of TDA and Thai people have truly touched our hearts. From the moment we arrived we were greeted with open arms and treated with utmost kindness that gave us a homely and festive feeling. Thailand has a very rich food culture and its street food is really exemplary. Enjoying Thai cuisine together was a great experience for us specially Tom Yum Soup, Mango Sticky Rice with Coconut cream dessert, Rambutan and Dragon fruit. Thai food is unique, tasty, simple, easy to digest & healthy. We also realized that people of Thailand maintain religious ethics and respect others religious norms, it is really heart soothing and comfortable for all of us. The TDA Conference itself was enlightening and

the inspiring presentation from esteemed figures such as Prof. Yamamoto, Madam Mary Easaw, Dr. Teiji Nakamura, Dr. Chwang Leh Chii, Asst. Prof. Dr. Chanida, and Senior Dietitians showed us the next path of Asian Dietetic Profession and guided us about what we need for the future.

While delivering his special lecture, Professor Yamamoto explained with examples what we dietitians need to think about what we should do so that the importance of Dietitians role is recognized. With his wisdom, he pointed out what are our challenges and how we can overcome it. His lecture is eye opening and very motivational for us. He showed a figure about the authors of journal articles in clinical nutrition, unfortunately there are very few Dietitians as authors.

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Fig 3. AYDN members enjoying dinner together

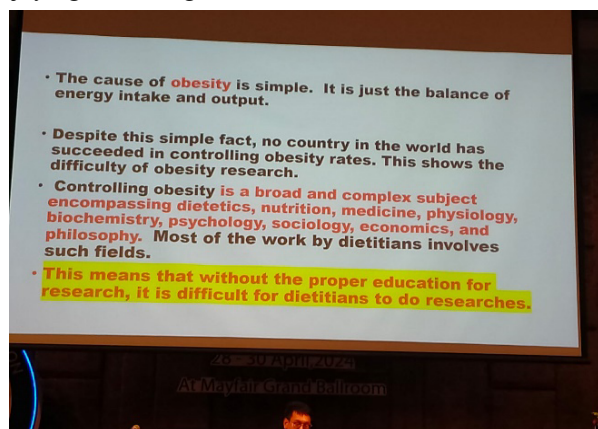
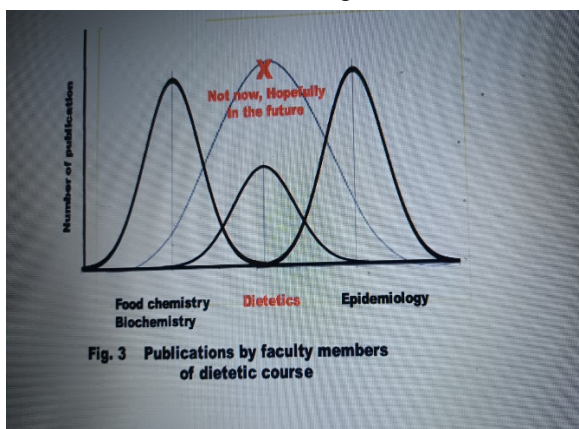


Fig 4. Less publications from faculty members of dietetic course and important messages from Prof. Yamamoto

We must focus in this area and try our best to change the scenario. He also mentioned that we need proper education for research. Prof. Yamamoto believes that the cause of obesity is simple. It is just the balance of energy intake and output despite this simple fact, no country in the world has succeeded in controlling obesity rates. Controlling obesity is a broad and complex subject encompassing dietetics, nutrition, medicine, physiology, biochemistry, psychology, sociology, economics & philosophy. This means that without the proper education for research, it is difficult for dietitians to do research. He also showed examples of Dietitians research. One example was modifying the school lunch. With almost the same price how more nutrients were added in the school lunch and it became healthy. Moreover the children liked there new food and ate with smiling face. The other one was use of full automatic rice cooker which is certainly food for thought.

Madam Mary Easaw's passion to her profession inspired us. Among many important messages she highlighted on culinary skills which is very essential for dietitians. She encouraged to modify traditional and festival recipes in healthy ways. We also got some precious Take Home Messages, like, collaboration with continuity, devotion with empowerment and professionalism with qualification from Dr. Chwang Leh Chii.

Dr. Teiji Nakamura motivated dieticians and AYDN members to continue pursuing excellence in the nutrition and dietetics field. Dr. Nakamura wants to unify the Asian dietetics system with ICDA standards and also focuses on quality assurance by training courses for dieticians and expansion of postgraduate education for dieticians. Moreover, he highlighted sustainable healthy diets, body, and planet friendly diet with the emphasis on reduction of environmental impact. If the advices provided from our mentors can be implemented, there will be a new era for dieticians and dietetics.

Moreover, we also gained lots of valuable ideas from our AYDN member friends, because they are working as dieticians in diverse settings, which is not yet common in our country. For example, dietitians working in community level, schools etc. and contributing in the various areas of the society. We are hopeful that we can also implement these ideas in our country and our working places.

Bachelor of Nutrition program

In Bangladesh our Bachelor of Nutrition Program is not unified in all the institutions. However we can notice gradual improvement in the curriculum. There are strengths and weaknesses as well. About the strengths, we have 4 year long BSC programme which consist of coursework combined with Hospital/NGO,

Food Industry internships. The curriculum focuses on Research methods, Research project, Field assignment. Furthermore our present curriculum includes new areas like food technology, We have many areas of improvement also.

In Bangladesh we need certified programmes in specialized areas. The curriculum does not include dietician’s training programme. Moreover number of Professors or faculty members who are dietitians is very low.

Insights gained and Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

TDA was an excellent learning platform for dietitians. From our wise mentors we are inspired that we should be devoted to our work, acquire several essential skills, we have to be innovative and do quality research work and publication. We should think more to understand our shortcomings and accept the challenges for our professional growth. We should expand our network and learn from each other.

We have learned a lot from our fellow AYDN members too, as they have knowledge and skills on various areas of dietetics. They possess sound knowledge on school lunch, culinary skill, analytical skill, nutrition for autistic children etc. We can learn from each other and share the ideas in our country so

that our people also get these services at wide level. For example, school healthy tiffin or lunch program is not regular and does not cover vast area in Bangladesh, we will try to start these programs in various schools, it will contribute in the physical and mental development of our school children.

Currently AYDN is assessing the BSc in Nutrition curriculum among the AYDN member countries. The assessment provides a comparative scenario, where we can observe the diversity and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the education system of different member countries. From the research result each country can find out their area of improvement. For example, there is no national examination for graduates to be registered dietician in Bangladesh; we have to work in this area.

For the development of AYDN, firstly we have to love our profession by heart. Strong bonding and understanding among AYDN members is also important. Furthermore, we have to earn necessary knowledge and skills. We should emphasize on necessary research work in dietetics and publish quality research work. We believe that if we work together with determination success is not far

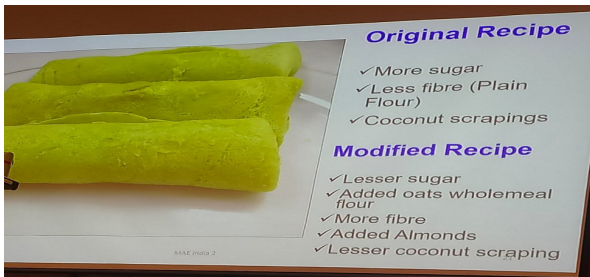


Fig 5. Modifying traditional snacks to healthy snacks by Madam Mary Easaw

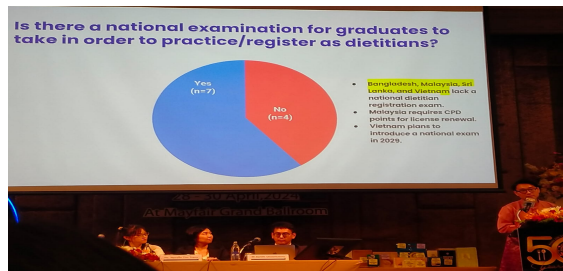


Fig 6. No opportunity for Graduates to be Registered Dietitians in Bangladesh yet

Report (Bhutan) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

The Young Asian Dietitian Network (AYDN) was founded in the beginning 2022 and has been just able to conduct some online meetings to strengthen the network amongst the dietetic professionals in the member countries (11 Asian countries). The network aims to establish a reliable and accessible platform for exchange of knowledge, skills and jointly conduct researches in the areas of Nutrition and Health.

The AYDN have been doing a comparative study on the curriculum of Dietetic training programs across the member nations and the same was presented during the 50th Anniversary of Thai Dietetic Association (TDA) which was held in Bangkok from 28 to 30th April, 2024.

The opportunity to introduce and meet different professionals among the network at such an established forum was only possible with the generous support from TDA and Ajinomoto. We were invited to attend the 50th TDA anniversary meet and travel was supported by Ajinomoto Company's. Professional guidance and support from esteemed Professor Yamamoto was instrumental in making a meeting a success as he was involved in securing financial support and logistic arrangement.

Personal Reflections

Initially the Bhutanese team was a bit apprehensive as we have not travelled much to Bangkok and have known Thai people but to our surprise we found almost all the Thai people we encounter were very humble, loyal and friendly that has given us much confidence and added comfort during our stay there. Besides that, TDA in particular was found so supportive and considerate in accommodating and accepting all our needs particularly to do with attending meeting and letting us to introduce AYDN and lastly in showcasing our work done thus far to all the attendees of TDA meeting. On the other note, it was very good to see that Thailand has very rich dietary diversity extending from sea foods to seasonal fruits and vegetables.

We could also learn so much insights both professionally and personally from the presentations made by scholars like Prof. Yamamoto, Madam Mary, Dr. Teiji Nakamura, Prof. Chanida and of courses from all other esteemed presentations on latest advancements in the field of diet and nutrition for the global population. The insights gained especially in the areas of diet and nutritional research enabled us to engage in clinical researches at our work places once we get back to the country respective work places.

Bachelor of Nutrition program

Currently Bhutan does not have any institute/college/ university offering any level of diet and nutrition training. All the Dietitians working in the country have mostly completed bachelors in Nutrition and Dietetics from India, Thailand and a few from other countries. In Bhutan, dietitians are regulated by Medical and Health Professionals Council, a body further governed by Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority functioning under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Royal Government of Bhutan. No dietitians are allowed to practice, without getting registered with the council be it in the academia or in the clinical setups.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

Meeting at Thailand, Bangkok was an eye opening for all of us (Bhutanese) as we have hardly attended such regional meetings/ conferences on diet and nutrition alone, that too organized by the dietetic professionals. The very meeting enabled us to exchange information on dietetic practices across member countries and it also served a great platform for exchange of knowledge and skills amongst the fellow dietitians. The meeting and the presentation particularly by AYDN on curriculum comparative study, for Bhutan it equipped us to go for the best dietitian training programs practiced in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and Philippines when in future Bhutan aspires to start training programs for dietitians.

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Report (India) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

The Young Asian Dietitian Network (AYDN), established in early 2023, embarked on a mission to strengthen the ties among dietetic professionals across 11 Asian countries. Through online meetings, AYDN aims to foster a platform for the exchange of knowledge, skills, culinary, cultural habits, and collaborative research in the domains of Nutrition and Health. The first successful study was of Cuisine and food culture understanding, Dietitian's presence in the community, and an overview of Diseases in the country presented in Japan on December 2023. The Second initiative AYDN includes a comparative study on the curriculum of dietetic training programs across member nations. This study culminated in a presentation at the 50th Anniversary of the Thai Dietetic Association (TDA) in Bangkok from April 28th to 30th, 2024.

Acknowledgments

We as AYDN are in deep appreciation for Professor Yamamoto's guidance. He continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the Asian Young Dietitian Networking enabling unity, Friendship, Scientific exchange, and Cultural and Culinary Understanding among members from Asian Countries. The generous support from Ajinomoto to propel AYDN from its inception is highly appreciated. 50th. Unmatched hospitality was truly TDA anniversary provided an invaluable opportunity for AYDN to showcase its work and interact with professionals from diverse backgrounds. The deep dive into Thai Cuisine, culture, and Hospitality was highly appreciated. TDA's support in accommodating our needs and facilitating introductions enhanced our sense of belonging

Personal Reflections: The experience in Bangkok was enriching on both professional and personal fronts. Our Thai colleagues were extremely humble, friendly, and immaculate in the organization leading to seamless learning. Moreover, Thailand's rich dietary diversity left a lasting impression, offering insights into regional nutrition practices. The presentations by esteemed scholars like Prof. Yamamoto, Madam Mary Esow, Dr. Teiji Nakamura, Dr Chawng Leh Chii, and Prof. Chanida provided valuable insights into the latest

advancements in diet and nutrition research. These learnings not only broadened our professional horizons but also inspired us to engage in clinical research upon our return. Easy to execute research proposal with significant impacts on communities was a great learning, One particular example that I want to elaborate on is a research study quoted by Dr Yamamoto-Where he explained the change in form of cutting vegetables from coarse to fine and smaller pieces and easy to chew for young school going children greatly increased consumption, making the meal enjoyable -hence no wastage and better nutritional status among school children.

Study on Bachelor of Nutrition Program of different countries.

Every member nation representative presented their unique data of Bachelor programs. It encompassed Subjects of Basic Science and Nutrition. Also Number of hours and credits devoted to subjects in the syllabus. The study also evaluated Trainers, and instructors- specifically scientists, clinical dietitians, food service managers, food technologists, Nurses, Doctors, and others. The study also attempted to understand the role of Regulation by the Medical and Health Professionals Council standards set by the country Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority, mandating registration for practice in academic and clinical settings. In India, the Dietetic Association is under the Allied Health Council of the government. This was an interesting activity as we realized that every Institute even in India had varied and unique subjects and Syllabus. Lack of Standardization was seen across curriculum across member nations.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

The TDA anniversary catalyzed future endeavors within AYDN. The exchange of information on dietetic practices among member countries highlighted the need for continued collaboration. AYDN's presentation on curriculum comparison provided valuable insights for India's future endeavors in establishing dietitian training programs, drawing from best practices in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, and the Philippines. In conclusion, the 50th TDA anniversary was a transformative experience, reaffirming AYDN's commitment to advancing the field of dietetics in Asia through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective growth

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Report (Indonesia) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

To mark a significant milestone, the 50th anniversary of the Thai Dietetic Association (TDA), the Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) participated in a series of events organized by the TDA. Among the twenty AYDN members who attended the events held in Bangkok, Thailand, at the end of April 2024, two Indonesian representatives, Achmed Forest Khan and Nur Ayu Ruhmayanti, actively participated in the symposiums, the AYDN meeting, and other events. This event served as an excellent platform for Asian dietitians and Thai dietitians to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. It was particularly fruitful in sharing insights on nutrition and dietetics education at the undergraduate level in Asian countries. The event also facilitated a discussion session for the young dietitians to strategize future activities of AYDN.

We would like to thank the TDA for their invaluable support in making this event possible. We also sincerely appreciate the generous sponsorship from Ajinomoto Co., Inc. Last but not least, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto of Jumonji University for his unwavering dedication and support since the inception of AYDN. Your contributions have been instrumental in our journey.

Personal Reflections

One of the event's highlights was a thought-provoking lecture by Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto of Jumonji University, who shared insights on the dietary standards of Japan, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by dietitians in Japan. His lecture included a practical example of food modification, where several food ingredients were added to school children's lunch menus to enhance their nutritional value. This modification, it is hoped, will lead to improved academic performance among school children without significantly increasing the menu cost. All the presenters delivered their material with outstanding clarity and received high praise from the entire audience and all the parties involved in the series of activities commemorating the TDA. AYDN Meetings are usually held online, but on this occasion, they were held onsite. On this occasion, we discussed the follow-up to the delivery of study results from the dietitian education system of each AYDN member country. After this activity, it is hoped that all AYDN

members will be directed to convey the study results back to the relevant parties in their respective countries to become discussion material to improve the quality of dietitian education in each AYDN member country. AYDN's activities continue to enhance the reputation of dietitians, which is in line with the primary goal of AYDN. For the next step, we will discuss the legal system and its application to the world of work for dietitians. On that occasion, we also agreed on the official logo for AYDN and the management structure of AYDN, which consists of a coordinator and secretary as well as other supporting roles so that AYDN can run better and provide more significant benefits to the progress of the Asian Dietitian profession, especially AYDN member countries.

Together with AYDN Thai members, TDA and Ajinomoto Co., Inc. have provided us with the warmest hospitality. Our members have gratefully enjoyed the halal Thai cuisine, the beautiful scenery, and the rich culture of Thailand during our stay in Bangkok. With the AYDN members from other countries, we have shared the diverse Asian culture during our companionship. Together, we celebrated not only the 50th anniversary of TDA but also the eclectic culture of Asia.

We were deeply inspired by Prof. Yamamoto's dedication and passion, the Thai dietitians' diverse perspectives, and the innovative ideas shared by the AYDN members. This experience has reinforced our belief in the importance of international collaboration and knowledge sharing in advancing the field of dietetics in Asia.

Bachelor of Nutrition program

We collect data on dietitian education based on regulations from the Association of Indonesian Higher Education Institutions for Nutrition (AIPGI) as a reference for universities providing dietetic education and the Association of Higher Education Institutions for Vocational Nutrition in Indonesia (AIPVOGI) as a reference for vocational colleges providing education for dietitians in Indonesia. After holding discussions with representatives from other countries, it was agreed that the data from Indonesia used dietitian education at universities ranging from undergraduate education to professional dietitian education¹. There are differences in the undergraduate education system based on the AIPGI and AIPVOGI references; however, dietitian professional education is similar to the professional

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education administration system based on these two references.

Among the 118 universities that provide Bachelor of Nutrition education and nine institutions providing professional dietitian education in Indonesia, an institution was selected as a reference for the Bachelor of Nutrition and professional dietitian education

curriculum. A curriculum example of a Bachelor of Nutrition education was obtained from Brawijaya University, under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi)². For professional dietitian education, the curriculum of Makassar Health Polytechnic of the Ministry of Health was referred to.



Fig 1. Halal dining and heartfelt hospitality of the Thai Dietetic Association



Fig. 2. Breathtaking scenery of Bangkok we enjoyed with young dietitian fellows of Asia

Indonesia's undergraduate nutrition education curriculum has approximately 150-175 credits for undergraduate programs and professional education for dietitians. Each credit is equivalent to 170 minutes and

consists of theory (onsite), practice, independent learning, or other forms of learning. The professional dietitian education curriculum comprises 26 practical credits, equivalent to 1032 practical hours in one year

of dietetic internship education (2 semesters). The duration of the dietetic internship hours exceeds the 500-hour standard set by the International Confederation of Dietetics Association (ICDA)³.

Several courses are also the focus of our discussion. In Indonesia's Bachelor of Nutrition curriculum, there are still many general courses that students must take. On the one hand, several nutrition courses are elective courses, such as food microbiology, sports nutrition, nutrition program planning, and other elective courses, while in different countries are core courses in undergraduate nutrition education. This will be one of the things that needs to be discussed with nutrition education organizers in Indonesia.

Teaching resources in Indonesia are diverse. The teaching staff consists of nutrition staff themselves, both dietitians and nutritionists, doctors, nurses, midwives, environmental health, and public health, and the teaching staff may come from outside the field of science, such as science, food technology, and even teaching staff from the legal field are also covered inside it. As for the professional education program (dietetic internship), all clinical instructors come from dietitians for clinical and public health programs. For food service management programs, there are other

staff from food technology, human resource management, catering services, and nutrition and food services entrepreneurs.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

For instance, we discussed the extent of practical training in dietetics education, the need for an updated curriculum reflecting the latest research, and the role of technology in enhancing nutrition and dietetic education corresponding to nutrition issues in Asia. In Indonesia, improving nutrition and dietetic education must address the needs of different communities across the archipelago. We must enhance the curriculum to equip our graduates, the future nutritionists and dietitians, with skills for local nutritional interventions.

In the future, we suggest that AYDN organize more symposiums, workshops, and exchange programs to improve its members' knowledge and skills. We also aim to strengthen our collaboration with other dietetic associations and organizations to promote the field of dietetics in Asia. We hope that activities like this can continue and produce the best ideas to increase the competence of young dietitians worldwide, especially young dietitians in Asia.

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Report (Japan) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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At the symposium held at the Thai Dietetic Conference in Thailand, the Asia Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) introduced a comparative study of dietitian academic and training programme from the members' countries. There were differences in the programmes among countries, and it was able to find advantages and disadvantages in each country. Through the gathering of AYDN's members in Thailand, the goal was to share and deepen the education system of each country to understand the current situation to improve the education system of each country in the future.

At the TDA conferences, we it was able to listen to Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto's lecture (Jumonji University) about "What dietitians need for the future: Researches at their workplace". The author agree that Japanese university system for dietitians do not place emphasis on investigation of methodology. However, the study of dietitians in their workplaces introduced by Prof. Yamamoto was very interesting. One of the example was the cooking area for the preparation of school lunch with the incorporation of new technologies to improve dietitians' work environment in Japan and another example was the challenge for dietitians from Vietnam to increase variety of vegetables and other nutritious foods added in school lunch meals keeping a low cost. These cases were published in an academic journal in order to spread to other colleges the information which would be very useful because it has many similarities with the problems faced by other dietitians in the world. Unfortunately in Japan, the researches are only reported within a particular community or region and there are few opportunities to refer them. Therefore, the author believe that dietitians should disseminate the results of their researches outside the community.

On the other hand, during the conference, it was possible to interact with the members of AYDN, which was very inspiring. The sharing of educational programs from various countries through AYDN activities would help to identify differences between own and other countries, and provide an opportunity to reconsider our the educational programs for the next generation of dietitians. Furthermore, in countries that do not yet have an established dietitian system, it may help to create educational programs. By cooperating and working together in the network, it is possible to contribute not only in Japan but also in Asia as a whole for a better academic system. Lastly, but not the least, the author would like to acknowledge to the warmth welcome and the hospitality of Thai Dietetic Association (TDA) for giving the change to be present

in the conference and to Jumonji University for the preparation of the trip and the support and valuable comments from Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto to guide the AYDN and the sponsor from Ajinomoto Co., Inc. This trip allows to the author to experience the treat of dietitians of other countries, such as the participants of TDA, and also to experience the food culture of Thailand, such as the "Khow niew ma-muang", which combine cold sticky rice, coconut milk and ripe mango. Event that it was sweet, it was refreshing to eat when it was around 40 celcius degree in Thailand. In Japan, it is common to combine rice with sweet beans, but not with fruits, which made this dish interesting.



Fig 1. Khow niew ma-muang

Bachelor of Nutrition program

Through the discussions at AYDN, it was able to identify the characteristics of Japan's dietitian training programme. Japan's dietitian training programme has a general framework, but not in detail comparing with other countries. Therefore, the number of faculty members and the types of courses offered differ from university to university in Japan. The fact that educational programme are not defined in detail is a strength of the Japanese educational programme.

In Japan, dietitians work in a wide range of workplaces, including not only hospitals, but also public health centers, private institutions, schools, and restaurants. Therefore, the flexibility of the curriculum allows students to learn about matters in the field that interest the undergraduate students while acquiring the necessary knowledge as a dietitian. Another strength is the curriculum to obtain the nutrition teacher's license. A nutrition teacher is a position that combines the qualities of both, a dietitian and a teacher. The nutrition teacher system began in Japan in 2005. This licence allows dietitians to play a central role in promoting nutrition education in school. The curriculum for

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nutrition teachers includes various subjects such as child development, psychology, and educational methods. On the other hand, one of the weakness of Japan's dietitian training programs is the short time for practical training comparing to other countries. One of the reasons is the busy schedules of dietitians in their workplace. When it comes to accepting training students, dietitians have to supervise the students in addition to their regular tasks. However, it is not only a problem in Japan that dietitians are busy. Therefore, we should learn more about the situation from other countries to improve the Japan's dietitian training programme.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

Through the TDA conference, it was possible to learn the long history working together the Asian countries. The Asian Federation of Dietetic Associations, AFDA, was created in Malaysia in 1991. At the time of its founding, there were nine member

countries, including Japan, but now twelve countries are members. Nowadays, the Internet has become widespread, which able to organize meetings and sending messages anytime, and anywhere. It makes possible to easily transmit and receive information to and from people around the world. The young dietitians should cooperate with pioneers of AFDA.

As part of the future development of AYDN, its need to learn more about each country. The kick-off meeting helped us to understand each other's culture and general nutritional situation. However, learning more in details about the nutritional situation of each country, its able to share appropriate information to each problem. Although Asian countries have great differences such as in history, food culture and climate, the nutritional problems they face are similar. What is adaptable in one country may be adaptable in another. The hope is that this network will usher in a solution to Asia's nutritional problems by improving the education system of each country to enhance knowledge of dietitians.

Report (Malaysia) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

The goals of the Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) for this gathering in Bangkok, Thailand, in conjunction with the Thai Dietetic Annual Conference, are to foster collaboration, share knowledge, and strengthen the network of young dietitians across Asia. This event aims to enhance professional development, elevate the standards of nutrition practice in the region, and present insights from our research on the dietetic education system among AYDN member countries.

We gratefully acknowledge the hospitality and generous support from the Ajinomoto company. Special thanks to Prof. Yamamoto and TDA for sponsoring AYDN's activities, ensuring a successful and enriching experience for all participants.

Personal Reflections

During our time in Thailand, we were deeply moved by the warmth and hospitality extended by the Thai Dietetic Association and the locals in Bangkok. The vibrant Thai cuisine, delightful street food, and rich food culture left a lasting impression.

The TDA conferences were particularly impactful, featuring inspiring presentations from esteemed figures such as Prof. Yamamoto, Madam Mary Easaw, and Dr. Teiji Nakamura. Their remarkable careers serve as powerful motivation for dietitians and AYDN members to pursue excellence in the field of nutrition and dietetics.

Interactions with fellow AYDN members were enlightening. The exchange of ideas and experiences provided valuable insights that we can apply to our work upon returning home. Discussing the education and working systems from different countries highlighted the diverse approaches to nutrition and dietetics, emphasizing the importance of a collaborative and inclusive network.

Dietetics Program in Malaysia

Dietetics education in Malaysia is governed by rigorous standards to ensure the competence and professionalism of dietitians. Aspiring dietitians must complete a bachelor's degree in Dietetics or Nutrition and Dietetics from a recognized university, encompassing extensive coursework coupled with a mandatory clinical internship. These programs must be accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and recognized by the Ministry of Health. Currently, there are 9 universities in Malaysia offering dietetics programme that is designed in accordance with

the Programme Standards: Medical and Health Science provided by MQA.

The Programme Standards document provides guidelines for minimum acceptable practices in various aspects of educational programs, including aims and learning outcomes, curriculum design, assessment, student selection, academic staff, resources, program monitoring, leadership, governance, and quality improvement. It does not specify detailed characteristics for curricula or educational resources, instead encouraging diversity and innovation. This allows programme providers to customize their offerings to create unique niches while ensuring graduates meet professional and societal needs.

In dietetics, this Programme Standards document aims to train dietitians to, at least but not limited to, understand food science, interpret nutrition science, assess people's nutritional needs, conduct diet counseling, prescribe diets for medical conditions, implement and manage nutrition services and health promotion programmes, undertake research, deliver evidence-based nutrition care, and undertake development of nutrition and dietetic policies. The document also states 136 credits as the minimum graduating credits for a bachelor's degree in dietetics, in which it should offer supervised professional placement with 28-30 credits (equivalent to 1,120 to 1,200 hours). Supervised professional placement consists of clinical, community dietetics, and food service settings. In the other words, aspiring dietitians are given opportunities to access various settings including government facilities to fulfill the placement requirement, gain experience and advance professional practice.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

From the Thai Dietetic Conference and interactions with other AYDN members, we have learned the importance of continuous professional development and the value of a supportive network. Applying this knowledge, we aim to advocate for more structured specialization programs and increased international collaboration in Malaysia's nutrition education.

AYDN can significantly improve the undergraduate Bachelor of Nutrition program in Malaysia by facilitating knowledge exchange, providing access to international best practices, and offering professional development opportunities. For the future development of AYDN, we propose the following ideas:

1. Establish Mentorship Programs: Pairing experienced dietitians with young professionals to guide their career development.

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2. Promote Research Collaborations: Encouraging joint research projects among AYDN members to address regional nutrition challenges.
3. Expand Training Opportunities: Organizing workshops and training sessions on specialized topics to enhance the skills of young dietitians.

By implementing these initiatives, AYDN can continue to foster excellence and innovation in the field of nutrition across Asia. We hope that AYDN member countries will continue to work closely together, learning from and helping each other to grow, upskill, and improve the standards and recognition of dietitians in the region.

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Fig 1. AYDN Malaysia Representatives Mr. Ng Kar Foo (left) and Mr. Georgen Thye (middle) receiving a souvenir from Prof. Dr. Chanida Pachotikarn, President of the Thai Dietetic Association (right).

Report (Philippines) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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The members of the Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) were invited by the Thai Dietetic Association (TDA) to attend its 50th Anniversary and Annual Conference on April 28-30, 2024 at the Berkeley Hotel Pratunam, Bangkok, Thailand. The AYDN comprises dietitian representatives from various Asian countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. This meeting was made possible through the generous support and hospitality of the Asian Nutrition and Food Culture Research Center of Jumonji University and Ajinomoto Co., Inc. to promote professional development, enhance cross-cultural collaboration, and advance the field of nutrition.

The recent Thai Dietetic Association conference was a remarkable experience enriched by the warm hospitality and vibrant culture of the Thai people. AYDN members attended the opening ceremony and the presentation of the TDA Research Award on April 29, 2024. The conference was incredibly inspiring, especially with the presence of respected nutrition experts. The lectures by Prof. Dr. Shigeru Yamamoto, Dr. Chwang Leh-Chil, Dr. Teji Nakamura, Ms. Mary Easaw, and Asst. Prof. Dr. Chanida Pachitkarn left a lasting impression on the audience. Their careers and contributions in the field of nutrition are strong motivators for dietitians and members of the Asian Young Dietitians Network (AYDN). Their achievements demonstrated the endless possibilities of our profession and the importance of striving for excellence and innovation.

Interacting with other AYDN members was another cornerstone of the conference experience. This was the second meeting after our first meeting in December 2023 in Japan. This exchange was not only social but also deeply educational. The exchange of

insights and discussion of the different education and work systems in different countries enriched our understanding and broadened our perspectives. These discussions fostered a sense of global camaraderie and shared purpose by highlighting the diversity in our field and the universal challenges we face.

At the symposium on April 30, 2024, Asian Young Dietitian Network members Nguyen Thu Trang and Andrea Wakita gave presentations on the network's founding, activities and plans. Georgen Thy Choong Jean, Chu Tzu Yun and Prem Kumar Neopany presented the network's research: "Exploring the Landscape of Nutrition and Dietetics Training Program: A Comparative Study among Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) Member Countries." AYDN members had prepared for months to collect, assess, and report data for each country's Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics (BSND) program. The symposium discussed curriculum structures, faculty backgrounds, intern experiences, and common strengths and opportunities for improvement in nutrition and dietetics programs. During the discussion, it was noted that some data collected from other countries were only represented by one school or university, which may not represent all schools or universities in that country. It was also noted that the research compared various aspects such as the number of credits required for a bachelor's degree. Therefore, it is necessary to validate the standards in each country and conduct a new survey to update the results.

The BSND program in the Philippines is designed to provide students with comprehensive training in both theoretical and practical aspects of nutrition and dietetics. The program spans four years and covers a wide range of subjects including biochemistry, physiology, food science, medical nutrition therapy, community and public health nutrition, and food service systems management¹. In addition to classroom learning, students gain practical experience through supervised internships in hospitals, community health centers, and food service institutions. The BSND program is regulated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)², ensuring high academic standards are met. The program aims to establish a strong foundation in both nutritional science and practical applications, preparing graduates for various roles in the field. It offers internships in a variety of settings to provide valuable hands-on experience and focuses on public health nutrition to equip students to address broader nutrition issues in communities. However, some institutions may face challenges due to limited laboratory and research facilities, which can affect the quality of practical training. There may also be significant differences in the quality of education and



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training across institutions, impacting the uniformity of graduate competencies. Rapid advancements in nutrition science require continuous updates to the curriculum, and some programs may be slow in integrating the latest research and technologies. Access to the program can also be limited for students in rural or underserved areas, affecting the diversity and reach

of the profession. Overall, the BSND program in the Philippines aims to produce well-rounded and competent nutritional professionals. However, addressing the challenges related to resources, curriculum updates, and accessibility is crucial for enhancing the program's effectiveness and inclusivity.



The findings and experiences gained from this conference will certainly have a lasting impact on our professional lives. As we return to our respective countries, we carry with us not only the inspiration from the distinguished speakers but also the practical insights shared by our colleagues. This fusion of inspiration and practical wisdom will undoubtedly enrich our work and drive us to implement new ideas and approaches in our daily practice. In summary, the TDA conference in Thailand was a mix of professional development and cultural enrichment. The warmth and hospitality of the

Thai people, coupled with their exquisite cuisine, formed an unforgettable backdrop to an extremely inspiring and educational event. The lectures from leading figures in the nutrition industry and the valuable interactions with other AYDN members have strengthened our overall commitment to excellence in the field. As we continue our journey, these experiences will remain a source of motivation and guidance, encouraging us to make a positive contribution to the global nutrition community.



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Report (Sri Lanka) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

The Asian Young Dietitians Network (AYDN), established on December 1, 2023, held its second physical meeting in Thailand from April 28th to 30th, 2024. This event coincided with the Thai Dietetic Association's (TDA) 50th anniversary celebration, with TDA hosting and inviting AYDN members. Twenty-one dietitians from eleven Asian countries—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam participated, Dietitians from Cambodia are part of our member team, but representatives from Cambodia were unable to attend. The Sri Lanka Dietitians Association was represented by Ms. F.A.Z. Firouse and Ms. A.A.K.S. Abeyasinghe.

The 50th anniversary of the TDA was a prestigious event with esteemed guests. Having officials from the Thai Health Ministry underscores the importance of nutrition and dietetics in promoting public health. Additionally, the presence of officials from the Asian Federation of Dietetic Associations (AFDA) highlights the collaborative efforts across the region to address nutritional challenges and promote health status. Also, the participation of academics and dietitians from the Asian region was remarkable. The presidential address by Prof. Chanida Pachotikarn set the tone for the event, highlighting achievements, outlining future goals, and inspiring all attendees to continue their efforts in promoting the field of dietetics and improving public health outcomes (Fig.1).

AYDN members, after several online discussions, aimed to evaluate and enhance the academic curriculum and practical training of nutrition and dietetics programs across their member countries. They surveyed with three primary objectives: assessing the diversity of curriculums and educational pathways, examining practical training opportunities for nutrition and dietetics students, and identifying strengths and areas for improvement in member countries' degree programs. All country representatives were actively involved in carrying out the survey, which culminated in a comprehensive set of information to be presented at the TDA meeting under the theme "Exploring the Landscape of Nutrition and Dietetic Training Program: A Comprehensive Study Among Asian Young Dietitians Network Member Countries."

The AYDN symposium was structured into two main segments. Initially, Ms. Nguyen Thu Trang and Ms. Andrea Wakita played key roles, introducing the establishment of the AYDN and presenting the annual plan for 2024-2025. Following their presentation, Mr. Georgen Thye, Mr. Tzu Yun Cha, and Mr. Prem Kumar

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(representing Malaysia, Taiwan, and Bhutan respectively) shared the collective study findings. The session was moderated and translated by Mr. Samitti Chotsrlnencha from Thailand. These speakers were appointed through AYDN's collective decision-making process, reflecting the organization's commitment to teamwork. (Fig.2).



Fig 1. TDA 50th Anniversary Inauguration Ceremony with prestigious guests



Fig 2. AYDN Symposium

The meeting's success was significantly bolstered by several key contributors. The generous financial support from Ajinomoto Corporation provided crucial resources that facilitated the gathering. Additionally, the invaluable guidance of Professor Shigeru Yamamoto from Jumonji University, Japan, was instrumental. Prof. S.Yamamoto, a visionary leader in dietetics with extensive networking connections among senior Asian dietitians and industrial partnerships in the field of nutrition and dietetics, played a pivotal role in

offering expert insights and strategic direction that significantly shaped the objectives and activities of the AYDN. With his wealth of experience and deep

understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the field (Fig. 3).



Fig 3. Prof.S.Yamamoto directing and networking at the conference



Fig 4. Warm and welcoming hospitality received from TDA members

The TDA also played a crucial role in the event's success. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the TDA extended warm hospitality to all participants, creating a welcoming and conducive environment for fruitful exchanges and collaboration (Fig:4) This support from the TDA not only enhanced the experience for the attendees but also underscored the collaborative spirit that is essential for advancing nutrition and dietetics across Asia.

Personal Reflections

The warmth and hospitality at the TDA conference in Thailand left a lasting impression, highlighting the shared richness of Asian hospitality. As a team of dietitians, we were eager to explore different dishes according to local cultures and were delighted to taste some authentic Thai dishes, which are highly nutritious from a dietitian's perspective.

Esteemed figures such as Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto, Prof. Teiji Nakamura, Dr. Leh-Chii Chwang, and Dr. Mary Easaw delivered inspiring presentations, motivating dietitians and AYDN members to pursue excellence in nutrition. This exposure to field experts was particularly beneficial for young dietitians from Sri Lanka. The key takeaway for Sri Lankan dietitians was the importance of engaging in more research in addition to routine clinical practice (Fig.5).

One of the most memorable events was the grand celebration of the TDA's 50th anniversary. The TDA not only marked this milestone with grandeur but also offered several research grants and awards across different categories. These opportunities extended from school students to postgraduate students, involving academic organizations and industrial partnerships to

support and encourage research and innovation in the field of dietetics and nutrition.

Moreover, the conference provided an opportunity to meet key figures from the Asian Federation of Dietetic Associations (AFDA), expanding the Sri Lankan dietitians' network through potential AFDA membership. Interactions with fellow AYDN members offered valuable insights into diverse educational and working systems, presenting potential strategies for implementation in our home country (Fig.6).

As AYDN members chose to represent their countries in their traditional cultural attire, it fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures. Additionally, AYDN and TDA made sure to arrange food and other facilities following participants' religious values, ensuring a respectful and inclusive environment.

Bachelor of Nutrition program

In Sri Lanka, only one bachelor's degree is offered to produce registered dietitians recognized by the Sri Lanka Medical Council. The Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Nutrition program at Wayamba University of Sri Lanka features a robust and comprehensive curriculum that integrates essential basic science subjects and professional courses. The program is distinguished by its qualified faculty, predominantly experienced dietitians serving as academics and preceptors, and its emphasis on practical training through extensive clinical internships. Despite these strengths, the absence of a national examination for dietitian registration poses a challenge for standardization and recognition of qualifications. Additionally, while the clinical internships are well-structured, the training in community and food service

settings would benefit from increased and more structured hours.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

To foster AYDN in the future, several actionable steps for improving nutrition and dietetics education in Sri Lanka include: implementing a standardized national examination for dietitian registration and registration renewal process to enhance professional credibility; increasing the duration and structure of community and food service internships to meet international standards; and maintaining collaboration within AYDN to exchange best practices and

innovative educational strategies, benefiting the undergraduate program in Sri Lanka.

Future Development of AYDN

As a young organization, AYDN has established plans extending to 2026. For the years 2024 to 2025, AYDN is focusing on playing a crucial role in standardizing dietetics education across Asia. By creating a network of highly qualified dietitians, AYDN is dedicated to enhancing the field of Dietetics and Nutrition throughout the region.

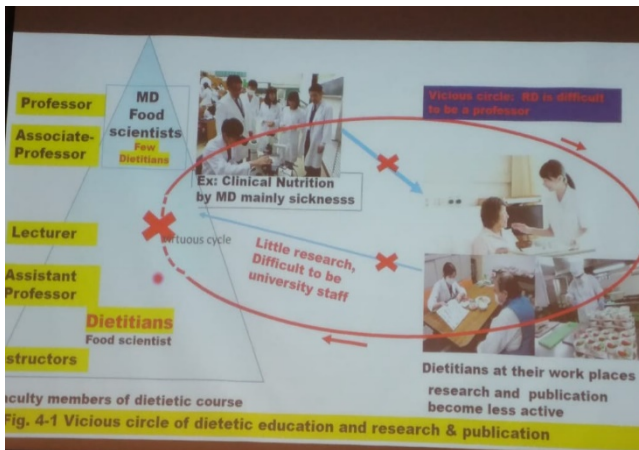


Fig 5. An eye-opening slide presented at the conference by Prof.S.Yamamoto & take-home message of Sri Lankan dietitians



Fig 6. Sri Lankan dietitians networking with AFDA, TDA officials and AYDN team

Report (Taiwan) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

The Asia Young Dietitian Network (AYDN)'s goals for this gathering in Thailand Dietetic Association (TDA) conference, Thailand, are to promote member interaction and cooperation, and to advance the field of nutrition. We acknowledge the hospitality and generous support received from Ajinomoto company, and the sponsorship of AYDN's activities by Prof. Yamamoto and TDA.

Personal Reflections

In Thailand, we experienced the warmth and hospitality of the Thai people, along with our appreciation for Thai cuisine, street food, and food culture. The diverse and delicious food is not only enjoyable but also a significant part of the culture, reflecting the creativity and warmth of the Thai people.

The TDA conference had a profound impact on us. The inspiring presentations from esteemed figures such as Prof. Yamamoto, Madam Mary Easaw, and Dr. Teiji Nakamura highlighted their careers, which serve as motivation for dietitians and AYDN members to continue pursuing excellence in the field of nutrition.

Interactions with fellow AYDN members were highly beneficial. These exchanges not only help with our individual work upon returning home but also provide valuable insights into the education and working systems of different countries.

Bachelor of Nutrition

Taiwan's Bachelor of Nutrition provides diverse employment opportunities but also faces challenges. Here are the strengths and weaknesses of career paths for graduates:

Strengths:

1. Diverse career options: Graduates can work in hospitals, schools, public health agencies, fitness centers, and food companies, holding positions like clinical dietitians, community dietitians, and researchers.

2. Professional certification: National exams grant nutritionist licenses, enhancing competitiveness and professional reputation.
3. Variety of internships: Emphasizing practical experience, the program offers internships in hospitals, schools, and communities.
4. Continuous education: Professional associations offer workshops and courses for skill enhancement.

Weaknesses:

1. Many Certifications but Not Specialized: Dietitians often need to get extra certifications to stay competitive. This broadens their knowledge but doesn't deepen expertise. They spend a lot of time and money on these certifications but struggle to gain trust in their consulting services, leading to negative effects.
2. Insufficient Internship Hours: Although internships are emphasized, there aren't enough hours, and the quality varies. Some hospitals offer internships just to meet requirements without providing real clinical experience, leaving students unprepared for the job market.
3. Low Salary Levels: Dietitians in Taiwan generally earn low salaries, forcing many to seek extra income through writing, consulting, or speaking engagements. While this helps raise income, it can commodify services and harm the professional image.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

From TDA and other AYDN members, we have learned many valuable lessons that will help improve the situation in our country. AYDN can enhance the Bachelor of Nutrition program in Taiwan by promoting international exchange and sharing best practices. Our future development plans include establishing more international collaboration projects, encouraging resource sharing, and regularly organizing professional training and seminars to enhance members' professional skills and knowledge.

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Report (Thailand) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Introduction

Asian Dietitian Network's was established for sharing information and experience toward Asian country, and developed research and publication to enhance future direction of dietetic framework. The Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) activities go on to Thailand for sharing knowledge in the Thailand Dietetic Association Conference 2024. This activity was supported by Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto (Jumonji University), Ajinomoto Co., Inc. Global Communication, and Thailand Dietetic Association (TDA). This report may aim to provide personal reflection of experience gathering in conference as well as to express appreciation of all hospitality and generous support received from all those who cooperated.

Asian Young Dietitian Network Symposium

On TDA conference 30 April 2024, AYDN Symposium was established to demonstrate collaboration and network working group. The purpose of the symposium was to propagate AYDN initiative group and share the knowledge and dietetic information among each country. The speaker of symposium including Mr. Samitti Chotsriluecha, Chairman (Thailand), Ms. Andrea Wakita, Co-chairman (Japan), Ms. Trang Thu Nguyen (Vietnam), Mr. Georgen Thye

(Malaysia), Mr. Markus Chu (Taiwan), Mr. Prem Kumar (Bhutan).

The first session composed of Establishment of Asian Young Dietitian Network, which presented by Ms. Trang Thu Nguyen, including the contents of gap between dietitian across Asian country, the establishment of AYDN, and future direction of AYDN. The second session displayed "Exploring the Landscape of Nutrition and Dietetics Training Program: A Comparative Study among Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) Member Countries. This session was presented aim to presented three objectives. First, to assess curriculum diversity and educational pathways in AYDN member countries. Second, to examine practical training opportunities for nutrition and dietetics students in AYDN member countries. Third to identify strengths and areas for improvement in AYDN member countries' degree programs. This session provides great value of informative learning programs among nutrition and dietetic course from each country, which lead us to enhance the competencies of dietetic students and make the new frontier of specific nutrition integrate with oriental intellectual such as phytonutrient from herbs and spices, Chinese traditional medicine, Ayurveda medicine, and also traditional Thai traditional medicine.



Fig 1. Asian Young Dietitian Network Symposium

In my point of view, dietitian should integrate and collect nutrition and dietetic knowledge according to evidenced-based and scientific methodology with the

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traditional intellectual. However, research in field of integrate medicine need to be further warrant of require more publication among nutrition and dietetic approach. This could be a strong point among Asian dietetic in future direction, which collaborate scientific

methodology with traditional intellectual toward sustainable development and nutrition for all.

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetic Program in Thailand

In Thailand, nutrition and dietetic programs composed of 19 courses as certified becoming registered dietitian. By the regulation of Dietetic Professional Council, the course syllabus of nutrition and dietetics program should be more than 120 credits incorporated with general education (> 24 credits), specific course on nutrition and dietetic (>72 credits), internship in nutrition and dietetic (>18 credits, > 900 hours), and elective course (> 6 credits).

The specific courses of nutrition and dietetic including introduction of food science and nutrition, food safety and sanitation, principles and culinary science, human nutrition, community nutrition, nutrition in life cycle, principle of nutrition and dietetics, nutrition assessment, medical nutrition therapy, nutrition counseling and behavior modification, seminar in nutrition and dietetics, research in nutrition and dietetics, and ethical and legal issues in dietetics, which are the fundamental course to enhance the core competency of dietitian. The additional course are special programs depend on university arrangement and requirement of professional dietetics such as personalized nutrition, sports nutrition, integrated nutrition, nutrition and pharmacology, innovation healthy food and disease-specific food, or sustainable food security.

The internship in nutrition and dietetic was regulated by law at least 900 hours, which including nutrition management and food service (>150 hours), clinical nutrition and dietetic (>300 hours), community

nutrition (>150 hours), and interesting internship (>300 hours). The regulation of internship hour in Thailand was higher than the International Confederation of Dietetic Associations (ICDA) standard at 500 hours, in additional some university able to provide 1,200 hours to dietetic student.

The strong point of Thai nutrition and dietetic curriculum was high internship hours, variety of special nutrition and dietetic course, which able to enhance in each field of nutrition e.g. public and community nutrition, food service and management, and clinical nutrition. However, there are also have the gap to fill with the improvement in specialist in each field such as certified specialist nutrition support board in specific disease, and also to improve the career pathways and employability.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

The network leads us to opportunities for learning and sharing. AYDN provides a platform to exchange nutrition and dietetic knowledge, enhancing our competencies based on the course curriculum. My suggestions for future development include standardizing and expediting dietitian competencies within multidisciplinary teams, sharing nutrition knowledge not only within Thailand but also across Asia, and conducting research on personalized and localized nutrition to ensure sustainable food and nutrition practices in Asia. Each Asian country faces unique nutrition challenges, but these can be transformed into exciting opportunities that call for ongoing collaboration and support. AYDN, as a proactive group of young dietitians, guides us towards growth and fortifying the dietetic field for the future.



Fig 2. AYDN members with Prof. Shigeru Yamamoto (center), Dr. Chanida Pachotikarn: the president of TDA (left of center) and Dr. Sunard Taechangam: advisory committee of TDA (right of center)

Report (Vietnam) on the Asian Young Dietitians Network Meeting in Thailand

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Following the success of the Asia Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) kick-off meeting in person was held for the first time in Tokyo, Japan, in November 2023, this year, thanks to the generous support from Professor Yamamoto Shigeru of Jumonji University, the Thailand Dietetic Association (TDA), and Ajinomoto Co., Inc. Global Communication Division, Japan, members of AYDN from 12 Asian countries had the golden opportunity to gather and discuss the curriculum of bachelor of nutrition programs at the undergraduate level. This meeting took place in Thailand alongside the 50th-anniversary celebrations of TDA Thailand.

With this honored opportunity, we had a great chance to present our country's data and engage in a fruitful exchange of ideas, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of bachelor of nutrition training programs. Furthermore, we built strong connections among all members and committed ourselves to dedicating our time and efforts to thriving the future of AYDN.

Personal Reflections on Widening the International Dietitian Circle (From Ms. Yen's perspective as a new member)

"I have been a new member of AYDN since February 2024. Over the past three months, I participated in numerous online meetings to discuss our concerns about the nutrition education system and how to improve it through the AYDNetwork. I was worried about our first meeting in Thailand because it was my first time meeting many international dietitians. Moreover, as a newbie, I was concerned about how to make friends with my new colleagues, even though we usually had monthly online meetings. However, all my worries disappeared immediately when I attended the first in-person meeting in Thailand. I felt that everyone was amiable and energetic, and I also sensed the enthusiasm for nutrition from my colleagues. Through multiple conversations, I gained a better understanding of the nutrition system in my friends' home countries. I am very grateful for the support from all our sponsors, including Professor Yamamoto Shigeru, Ajinomoto Co., Inc., Global Communication, and the Thailand Dietetic

Association. Without their generous support, we AYDN members would not have had the opportunity to meet each other in person.

AYDN serves as a vital network for connecting young dietitians, facilitating the exchange of insights and experiences among members from different countries, which we sometimes cannot find in academic papers. It is not only enhancing our understanding of the education system but also improving our professional performance.

During the conference, I had the privilege of meeting international colleagues specializing in diverse areas through AYDN. For instance, RD Zi Xuan Lin (Joy) from Taiwan specializes in pediatric dietetics, while RD Palmy from Thailand specializes in dysphagia management. I vividly recall the words that Joy told me when I asked her, "*Can I contact you if I face some challenges while taking care of my children's patients?*" Without any hesitation, she told me, "*Sure! I will help you as much as I can. Let's improve our dietitian community.*" I was delighted at the time, and I am confident that one of the best choices I made this year was to join AYDN. The AYDN gives me the impression that I have arrived at a hub of dietitians, something I would not have been able to easily find in my own country due to disparities in the nutrition workforce.

In Vietnam, our nutrition training programs are generally broad, lacking specialization in specific clinical areas such as pediatrics, endocrinology, ICU care, and dysphagia management. Therefore, interactions with colleagues specializing in these areas offer invaluable learning opportunities. I can seek advice from these experts when encountering challenging cases involving children or dysphagia patients. Moreover, I can share this knowledge with my colleagues and nutrition students during their internships at my hospital.

For me, AYDN is a priceless resource that will enable me to broaden my perspective and also go beyond my limited understanding of the nutrition education system."

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Fig 1. Friendship among AYDN's members



Fig 2. Vietnam AYDN's members and Prof. Chanida (the President of TDA)

Bachelor of Nutrition program

Up until 2024, Vietnam being one of the latest countries to establish dietetic courses did not have a standard curriculum for the Bachelor of Nutrition program. It has been only more than 10 years since Hanoi Medical University with the Ministry of Education and Training's permission started the first enrollment and specialized training of Bachelor of Nutrition (BN) students, with the job code 7720401 in 2013 (1). On the bright side, this means that Vietnam can inherit the comprehensive curriculum from Japan and other countries (Australia and America) that have many years of experience. Another strength of the Vietnamese training program is that with the increasing awareness of the importance of nutrition, numerous hospitals offer opportunities for students to gain clinical and hands-on experience by learning directly from patients, starting from their bachelor's degree studies. However, as mentioned before, Vietnam's nutrition field is still relatively new, and the number of human resources is still lacking; thus, almost all the professors and instructors are not from the background of dietitians but rather from doctors, and public health personnel. Therefore, when we looked at the fact that 100% of instructors are dietitians in other countries like Japan, Malaysia, and Taiwan..., we hope that in the future the opportunity for this career position will be more open to all Vietnamese dietitians.

Not only the background of lectures but the content of the current curriculum also needs to be constructed. In Vietnam, the curriculum does not help students specialize in three different areas of nutrition: food safety and hygiene, community nutrition, and clinical nutrition. It is highly recommended to reorganize the program, allocating two and a half years to train students in fundamental nutrition knowledge and one and a half years for specific areas in which students are interested (practice and internship-specific knowledge). This restructuring could help students navigate their career pathways later in life. Moreover, there is a critical need to augment on-site practice hours to meet at least the ICDA standard (500 hours). Although, during the 4-year program, the students get to spend many hours training at the on-site hospitals, they only focus on learning about diseases but not nutrition, which makes the actual number of internship hours in Vietnam lower than in other countries. The lack of

variety in on-site training facilities related to food technology, school nutrition, and food services is also a problem. Integrating nutrition into subjects taught at hospitals and expanding practical facilities can effectively address this issue.

Action Plan to Foster AYDN in the Future

Upon hearing different courses from various Asian countries during the presentation of AYDN at the Thailand Dietetics Association, we learned many intriguing and helpful ideas that can help improve our program in Vietnam. For example, we hope that we can adapt some of the unique subjects that are being offered in others such as, Japan has a lot of subjects that aid the understanding of cooking science, which can enable dietitians to improve their menu planning abilities and enhance communication with cooks. Or in the era of advanced technology and mass media, it is necessary to introduce the students to the advanced technology that can assist the dietitian's job. This can be achieved by introducing subjects related to software applications and having some subjects such as social marketing, mass communication, and information technology like in Sri Lanka. Vietnam can also learn how to distribute the number of internship hours to cover all the areas of dietitians' expertise from countries like the Philippines with their training regulation with one must have 600 hours of training at the hospitals, 300 hours at community nutrition, and 300 hours at food companies.

There are still many things that Vietnamese dietitians can learn from all their Asian colleagues in the Asia Young Dietitian Network, not only in enhancing the bachelor's training program but also in vast aspects such as the law system, registration system... With the pool data from all the member countries of AYDN, we can publish many meaningful articles that can serve as references for the recently established system like Vietnam, Cambodia... This can be a notable support for young dietitians when they want to approach the officials and the government to propose enhancement in the structure or procedures. We firmly believe that AYDN can be the new voice of all dietitians with their burning passion for making a change in the nutrition field and lifting the image of dietitians so that they can get their deserved recognition. Along with the tight-knit friendship from all our fellow members in the network, we, Vietnamese dietitians, will also devote our best to improving our country's

dietetics and are eager to contribute to the development of the network.

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