

# MOSES goes to Myanmar

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**ASSOC. PROFESSOR MICHAEL HOLLANDS**  
Past President RACS

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With a population of nearly 60 million in a country the size of France, Myanmar with its rich and diverse culture is making great strides in ensuring access to health care for all. RACS is playing a substantial role in developing and supporting this transition to sustainable national health structures.

Close to eight years ago, Management of Surgical Emergencies (MOSES) a non-technical skills course was developed by six RACS Fellows, with General Surgeons Australia (GSA) further funding and overseeing its progress. MOSES was rolled out in 2010, since then, nearly 300 general surgical trainees have successfully completed the course. MOSES, with its non-technical emphasis, seemed a perfect fit for the Myanmar program, given the focus on technical skills normally covered in the ASSET course.

In February 2017, two back-to-back MOSES courses were delivered, providing essential training to 32 national doctors, mostly junior consultant surgeons.



*MOSES course attendees with instructors*

The day before teaching started, we took a train ride around the suburbs of Yangon, the former capital. The circular loop ride has become one of “the things to do” in Yangon and encouraged us to take a closer look at the city. In a sense, the loop ride delivers an anthropological glimpse of how people live in Myanmar, providing the perfect backdrop for the days to come.

All too often with international travel, it becomes easy to stay in a comfortable hotel; travel to and from a hospital or university in a mini-van through the streets, day in and day out – missing the finer details that lie within the mosaic of a big city, and departing without gaining a true insight.

Teaching is not all hard work; courses in Myanmar invariably begin on the first day with a filling bowl of Mohinga, an enticing fish soup! The visiting MOSES team got into the spirit by wearing the local dress, the longyi, a garment much like a sarong for the day. Teaching in a new environment is always a challenge, however most surgeons in Myanmar are enthusiastic



in their participation and have a great working knowledge of English.

Under the direction of Professor Thien (Stephen) Lwin, a further 12 national MOSES instructors have been trained. The course consists of a series of lectures on subjects such as error, decision making, patient assessment, post-operative complications and ends with a lecture on ‘*what is surgical wisdom?*’ The lectures are complemented by group discussions using real life cases with Myanmar-based faculty preparing cases in advance, to ensure that the context of the course remains relevant. RACS has received excellent feedback from the MOSES courses.

Over the years, RACS in collaboration with the Australian College of Emergency Medicine and the International Federation of Emergency Medicine, has helped bring emergency management training to Myanmar. Between 2012 - 2015, 24 successful candidates have been awarded a Diploma of Emergency Medicine. In 2016, a Masters of Emergency Medicine Program began, steered by the very same Diploma qualifiers. With support from the Foundation for Surgery, courses including ASSET and EMST were introduced, and funding was provided for a Myanmar Scholarship Program, closely modelled on the successful Weary Dunlop Boon Pong Exchange Fellowship. Primary Trauma Care courses are now run in Mandalay and Naypyidaw as well as in Yangon by national faculty.

This work would not be possible without the invaluable input of the Director of the Myanmar Program, Dr James Kong FRACS, and champions such as Professor Zaw Wai Soe. Special thanks to General Surgeons Australia for helping bring MOSES to Myanmar, and Sally Erickson (Events Manager & Communications Officer of GSA) who organised the course.