

Tribute

Three honours across three professional communities: Emeritus Professor Dr. Kwan Hoong Ng and the regional evolution of radiology and medical physics

Received 19 September 2026; accepted 22 September 2026
doi:10.46475/asean-jr.v27i3.1054

Three honours in a single year

Within a period of little more than three weeks in 2026, Emeritus Professor Kwan Hoong Ng received three major professional honours from three distinct communities.

At the 24th Asian Oceanian Congress of Radiology in Singapore, held from 20–23 August 2026, he was awarded the **Asian Oceanian Society of Radiology (AOSR) Gold Medal**. On 11 September, in Busan, Republic of Korea, he received the **Asia-Oceania Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (AFOMP) Lifetime Achievement Award**. The following day, in Ipoh, Malaysia, the **Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) Gold Medal** added a third recognition.

The convergence is notable not simply because of the number of honours, but because they originate from different professional communities: radiology, medical physics, and the wider medical profession. Collectively, they provide an unusual perspective on a career that has developed across disciplinary and national boundaries, and alongside the transformation of medical imaging and medical physics in Asia-Oceania.

The AOSR Gold Medal is the Society's highest honour for an individual from the Asia-Oceania region who has rendered outstanding and exceptional service to the development, teaching, or practice of radiology. The AFOMP Lifetime Achievement Award recognises a distinguished career in medical physics and service to the profession and community. The MMA Gold Medal, in turn, has historically been described by the Association as its most meritorious award, recognising contributions that may encompass leadership, nation building, scientific achievement, and improvements in health and society.

Seen together, the three awards reflect an important feature of contemporary radiology: progress increasingly occurs not within a single profession, but at the interface between professions.

A medical physicist within the world of radiology

Professor Ng is a medical physicist by training and Emeritus Professor in the Department of Biomedical Imaging, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His academic interests have included medical imaging, breast imaging and breast density, radiation dosimetry and protection, computing and artificial intelligence, medical physics education and risk communication. Over four decades at Universiti Malaya, his work has extended from research and teaching to professional development and regional capacity building.

This breadth is important because medical physics is integral to modern radiology while frequently remaining less visible than its clinical components. Image quality, optimisation, radiation dose, equipment performance, safety standards, and the responsible introduction of emerging technologies all depend on the interaction of radiologists, radiographers, medical physicists, engineers, and other professionals.

Professor Ng's career has taken place within this interface. His contributions to the radiological community have included education, research, radiation protection, and the development of safety initiatives. He has also been involved in training generations of radiologists, clinical oncologists, and medical physicists.

The 2026 AOSR Gold Medal is therefore particularly significant. Its presentation to a medical physicist recognises that the advancement of radiology extends beyond image interpretation itself. The scientific and safety infrastructure around imaging is equally fundamental to its quality and effectiveness.

The AOSR Gold Medal: building a culture of safety



Professor Ng's most visible contribution within AOSR has been the development of **AsiaSafe**.

He formally proposed AsiaSafe to AOSR in 2017 and became its founding chair. The initiative was conceived to foster a culture of safety in medical imaging and radiation medicine across the Asia-Oceania region. He has subsequently represented AOSR in international organizations and initiatives involving radiation protection and safety, including the International Atomic Energy Agency and International Commission on Radiological Protection. He has also participated in AOSR efforts addressing magnetic resonance imaging safety and artificial intelligence in radiology.

These activities reflect a broader evolution within radiology. Safety is no longer confined to radiation dose or equipment quality assurance. Contemporary imaging requires attention to multiple interacting domains: radiation protection, magnetic resonance safety, contrast safety, data governance, artificial intelligence, workforce education, and risk communication.

AsiaSafe is therefore relevant not simply as an individual initiative, but as an example of regional cooperation in handling a common professional challenge. Countries in the Asia-Oceania region differ substantially in resources, healthcare structures, and access to technology, yet the principles of safe imaging must remain applicable across these environments.

For ASEAN radiology, this type of regional framework is particularly valuable. It allows experience, standards, and educational resources to be shared while recognising that implementation must be adapted to local circumstances.

AFOMP: from individual expertise to regional institutions



The AFOMP Lifetime Achievement Award highlights another dimension of Professor Ng's career: institution building.

His association with regional medical physics predates AFOMP itself. Professor Ng was a founding member and the founding president of the **Southeast Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (SEAFOMP)**. SEAFOMP was formally recognised as a regional chapter of the International Organization for Medical Physics in 2000, initially bringing together medical-physics organisations from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei and Vietnam subsequently joined.

The aims were practical: to improve communication and cooperation between medical physicists, advance professional standards, strengthen education and training, and create opportunities for scientific exchange across Southeast Asia. These objectives were particularly important at a time when medical physics was developing unevenly across the region.

Professor Ng was also among those involved in the foundation of **AFOMP**, extending this model of cooperation across Asia and Oceania. As a co-founder of the Federation, he contributed to the development of a regional professional community that brought together medical physics organisations across a much larger and more diverse geographical area. AFOMP has since become an important platform for scientific exchange, professional development, education, and collaboration among medical physicists throughout the Asia-Oceania region. Professor Ng's long association with the organisation gives the 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award particular significance: it represents recognition from a professional community that he himself helped to build.

More recently, he established the **ASEAN College of Medical Physics (ACOMP)**, founded in 2014 as a regional platform for education and training in medical physics. ACOMP provides structured opportunities for medical physicists across Southeast Asia to strengthen their knowledge, develop professional skills, and learn from experts within and beyond the region. By bringing participants from different ASEAN countries together, it also creates professional networks that continue beyond individual courses. In this way, ACOMP complements organisations such as SEAFOMP and AFOMP by translating regional collaboration into practical education and capacity building for the next generation of medical physicists.

The AFOMP Lifetime Achievement Award therefore recognises more than a body of scientific work. In Professor Ng's case, it also reflects his contribution in building the professional structures through which medical physics has developed in Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Oceania region.

MMA Gold Medal: contribution to the wider benefit of society



Where the AOSR and AFOMP awards originate from communities closely connected with Professor Ng's principal fields of work, recognition by the **Malaysian Medical Association (MMA)** places his contributions within a broader national and societal context.

The MMA Gold Medal is awarded to a member for outstanding contribution in areas that may include nation building, leadership, world-class medical or scientific research, innovation in addressing healthcare or social challenges, or achievements that have had a meaningful impact at a personal, national, or international level. Its criteria therefore extend beyond academic distinction alone, encompassing the translation of expertise into wider benefit for society.

This is particularly relevant to Professor Ng's career. Much of medical physics ultimately serves objectives that are clinical and societal rather than purely technological: improving diagnosis, ensuring the safe and appropriate use of radiation, supporting the introduction of new technologies, protecting patients and healthcare professionals, and strengthening the systems within which healthcare is delivered. His work in radiation protection, professional education, regional capacity building, and risk communication reflects this broader orientation.

The boundaries between scientific disciplines and clinical medicine have also become progressively less distinct. Artificial intelligence, quantitative imaging, advanced imaging systems, and precision radiation techniques increasingly require expertise extending beyond conventional professional silos. Medical physicists, radiologists, engineers, and clinicians may approach these technologies from different perspectives, but their effective integration is central to safe and effective patient care.

The MMA Gold Medal therefore adds an important dimension to the other two honours. It recognises Professor Ng's contributions not only within radiology and medical physics, but also in the wider context of leadership, healthcare development, and the application of science in ways that can influence professional practice and society.

An ASEAN contribution

The development of medical imaging in Southeast Asia has occurred against substantial differences in healthcare resources, workforce capacity, technological access, and professional structures. Yet many of the challenges facing the region—education, quality assurance, radiation safety, responsible adoption of new technologies, and workforce development—are shared.

Professor Ng's work with SEAFOMP, ACOMP, AFOMP, and AsiaSafe (AOSR) has consistently addressed these shared challenges through professional networks rather than through a single institution or country.

Regional professional organisations create mechanisms by which countries can learn from each other's experience while developing local capacity. They also provide younger professionals with access to mentors, scientific exchange, and professional communities that may not otherwise be available within their own institutions.

Professor Ng's career illustrates how regional progress in medical imaging and medical physics depends not only on technological advancement, but also on the development of professional capacity. Trained professionals, strong institutions, safety cultures, educational networks, and sustained opportunities for collaboration are all essential components of that progress. His work across multiple regional organisations has contributed to building this shared professional infrastructure across Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Oceania region.

Scholarship, communication and the next generation

The three awards also sit within a longer record of recognition. Professor Ng was named by the International Organization for Medical Physics among 50 medical physicists who had made outstanding contributions to the field, received the IOMP Marie Skłodowska-Curie Award in 2018, and received Malaysia's Merdeka Award for Outstanding Scholastic Achievement in 2020.

His interests have nevertheless continued to evolve with the profession. Artificial intelligence, responsible innovation, radiation and magnetic resonance safety, risk communication, and professional education remain active areas of his resonance imaging safety work.

Communication has also extended beyond academic publishing. In addition to scientific writing, Professor Ng is a regular newspaper columnist and contributor, writing for a broader readership on science, artificial intelligence, ethics, education, and reflections on everyday life. Recent columns have appeared regularly in Malaysian publications including Malay Mail and Star. This aspect of his work is secondary to his scientific career but consistent with his longstanding interest in communicating complex ideas beyond specialist audiences.

Three honours and a wider perspective

Awards inevitably look backwards. They recognise work already undertaken and contributions already made. The concentration of three major honours in 2026, however, also provides an opportunity to consider the direction in which radiology and medical physics are moving.

The AOSR Gold Medal highlights the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of radiology. The AFOMP Lifetime Achievement Award highlights the importance of education, professional organization, and regional institution building. The MMA Gold Medal places these contributions within the wider context of medicine and society.

For ASEAN to be replaced by Asia-Oceania, the larger lesson is that the advancement of radiology depends on more than acquiring increasingly sophisticated technology. It also requires the less visible infrastructure around that technology: appropriately trained professionals, scientific rigour, standards, safety culture, mentorship, communication, and sustained cooperation across borders.

Professor Kwan Hoong Ng's career has intersected with each of these elements. The three honours conferred in 2026 recognise different aspects of that career. Taken together, the three honours recognise not only Professor Ng's scientific contributions, but also a broader legacy of institution building, professional development, mentoring, and regional collaboration that has helped shape medical physics and radiology across Asia-Oceania.

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