

## FEATURE



# ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY

The recent Primary Trauma Care (PTC) Instructor Master Class in Myanmar (Burma) came close to being a remake of that classic Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour film, *Road to Singapore*, as its instructors worked their way to Mandalay writes Dr Haydn Perndt (MBBS, FANZCA, FFARCS).

The Instructor Master Class 'starred' Bob Hope (aka Dr James Kong, a surgeon from Hong Kong) with Bing Crosby (Dr Tsun Woon Lee, an anaesthetist also from Hong Kong) and Dorothy Lamour (Dr Georgina Phillips, a Melbourne emergency physician currently working in Yangon). Dr Yu Fat Chow (another anaesthetist from Hong Kong) and Dr Haydn Perndt (an anaesthetist from Hobart) played supporting roles.

The 'Road Movies' were 1940s and 1950s Hollywood at its best. Light, entertaining

and deceptively well crafted, these films amused a generation of theatregoers. Filled with song and humour, they needed minimal narrative. Not so the PTC story, which started in 1997 in Suva, Fiji, with a course co-authored by Tasmanian anaesthetist Associate Professor Marcus Skinner and Dr Douglas Wilkinson, an anaesthetist/intensivist from Oxford. PTC is now in over 60 countries and has been translated into 14 languages.

Like any good film franchise, the PTC roadshow spread quickly across cultures and language. The commonality of the burden of trauma care was recognised by surgeon, emergency physician, intensivist and anaesthetist alike. Here was a practical and systematic approach to improve the management of trauma that had been specifically designed for the low resource countries where 90% of the mortality and morbidity occurs.

The British ran courses in Africa and South America while the Australian activities were in the Pacific and South East Asia. The PTC course was agnostic of medical specialty, attracting instructors and participants from Early Management of Severe Trauma, Advanced Trauma Life Support, surgical, anaesthetic and emergency backgrounds. The courses have now spread to the Middle East and Central Asia.

Bob Hope (James Kong) and Bing Crosby (TW Lee) have been 'on the road to Mandalay' since 2007. James Kong had visited after Cyclone Nargis and with Royal Australasian College of Surgeons funding started what is arguably one of the most interesting PTC start-ups. A charismatic, softly spoken local general practitioner, Dr Vijay Kumar has been a very quiet achiever, leading the courses from success to success. Senior orthopaedic surgeons

and Yangon University professors helped move the political obstacles. Any new health initiative in low or middle income countries must perform take resources from other pre-existing health care priorities. The success of a new program is often more political than medical.

Like all the 'Road Movies' the Yangon Instructor Master Class had a story within a story. On this particular week of teaching, Bob Hope (James) was planning to train new PTC instructors, coach old instructors and mentor the nascent PTC leaders in the complex politics of developing PTC in Myanmar, all at the same time! Meanwhile, Dorothy Lamour (Georgina) was double-dealing elsewhere, designing and teaching a completely new training program for Myanmar's first Emergency Physicians from the ground up.

This was a plot that was bound to have complications. Between Dorothy's teaching sessions in the Emergency Department at the Yangon General Hospital and Bob's executive team building games in the lecture hall of the Myanmar Medical Association, Bing (TW Lee) decided to run a Change Management workshop. TW Lee has been a senior bureaucrat in the Hong Kong Health Department, so is well placed to teach on the subject. The irony of this in Myanmar, a country experiencing change at such an incredible pace since the easing of political sanctions, was not lost on any of the 'Road' cast.

Was there a happy ending in Mandalay? How do the Road Movies usually end? With a song and dance, of course. So, fittingly, this world-first PTC Instructor

Master Class cut to the credits with the airway, cervical spine, breathing, circulation, disability and exposure refrain ringing in our ears. A tightly choreographed Primary Survey was the encore before all returned home through the rainy and steamy Myanmar night.

'Road Movie' aficionados will know that the hugely popular *On the Road to Singapore* was released in 1940. It was the first of the very successful 'On the Road' series.

For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/1bpM5JI>.

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- 16 May 2014: Early Bird Registration opens
- 30 May 2014: Call for Papers closes
- 21 July 2014: Early Bird Registration closes
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