

The continued and seemingly unstoppable success of Manny Pacquiao served as a backdrop to the first ever conference on “Boxing and the Brain”, hosted by the department of neurosciences UP-Philippines general Hospital, in conjunction with the American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians.

The event took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December, consisting of two days packed with lectures.

Such was the intensity of this meeting, that each day saw a working lunch, with delegates having no time to stop, instead being served their meals as the lectures and discussions continued.

Three members of the board of directors of the AAPRP were invited to participate, and all readily took up the invitation to share their collective knowledge with a new and receptive audience.

As with all AAPRP events, the cost of travel arrangements were met by each individual delegate, but the chance to speak to a completely new audience, and open a truly international dialogue made this a very worthwhile venture.

The conference was opened by Dr Domenic Colleta (AAPRP), and the incumbent chair of the department of Neuroscience, Dr Carlos Chua. National basketball hero Senator Robert Jaworski gave the keynote speech to begin the proceedings.

Dr Ray Monsell (AAPRP) began with an overview of medicine in boxing, pointing out that it was indeed the medical profession which provided evidence in the central criminal courts in London in 1866, which removed boxing as a sport from future criminal indictment, recognizing its true value as a competitive sport.

Following a lunchtime symposium on the beneficial potential of coconut oils in medicine and in particular head injury, Dr Monsell gave his second and final lecture on the Pathophysiology of closed head injury, and the role of the ringside physician in mitigating the potentially fatal effects of such trauma. The open forum for questions was led by writer and commentator Ronnie Nathanielsz, whose 50 years experience in boxing was demonstrated by the specific and targeted questions, all of which declared a genuine concern for the welfare of the boxer.

A comprehensive overview of neuroimaging in sports related head injury was provided by Neuroradiology specialist Dr Claro Ison, who clearly demonstrated which investigations were available, and how they could be used in both acute and chronic head injury.

Dr Domenic Colleta concluded the first day with an overview of non neurologic emergencies in ringside medicine, and in doing so provided an excellent framework for some of the aspiring boxing doctors in the audience.

The next day opened at 8.30 sharp, with Dr Colleta continuing his theme from the previous evening, in a lecture entitled “How to be a good ringside Physician”. This led smoothly in to the presentation by Dr Joe Estwanik (AAPRP), in which the importance of rigorous pre fight evaluation of the athlete in both boxing and mixed martial art was systematically laid out.

Dr Gerardo Legaspi from the department of neuroscience provided an excellent and contemporaneous guide to the complex subject of when a boxer should be allowed to return to training and competition following head injury. The most fascinating aspect of this particular talk

was the wide variety of sports discussed, all of which have identified a specific problem with head injury and concussion.

Dr Godfrey Robeniol gave a very poignant lecture on Diagnosis & Treatment of Neuropsychiatric Symptoms in Acute and Chronic Traumatic Brain Injury. Whilst celebrating the current success of Manny Pacquiao, the plight of boxing icon Muhammad Ali was reflected upon. The non judgmental way in which this delicate subject was addressed provided the delegates with vital information to contemplate.

Dr Joe Estwanik provided yet another area of concern, in his discussion on “Diet nutrition and hydration in Boxing”. The marked fluctuation in a fighter’s weight between weigh in and actual fighting weight is an area that needs to be addressed if we are to protect our athletes.

The final talk was from NFL hall of fame star and football hero Carl Eller, who provided a firsthand account of the injury profile of the American Footballer. The sequelae of such injury did not finish with the end of the playing career, and to this end Carl has formed the retired players Association, and as president he continues to fight for the rights of retired players still struggling with injury incurred during their glory days.

This conference was a first for the department of Neuroscience, University of the Philippines, Philippines general Hospital. They have however set the bar extremely high, and subsequent seminars and conventions on Boxing and the Brain now have an excellent template both to follow and emulate. Whether this inaugural meeting will be surpassed remains to be seen. Delegates in attendance all described feeling privileged to have been part of this truly memorable event.

The real thanks goes to Dr Gerardo Legaspi, Dr Carissa Dioquino, and Dr Patricio Reyes, without whose vision, hard work and determination, this convention would have remained nothing more than just a good idea !!