

President's Address at the close of WALT2012 biennial congress, Gold Coast, Australia

“The tapestry of success is created in many pieces, large and small, by so many....” was the opening line by the incoming WALT President, Associate Professor Liisa Laakso on the occasion of the closing session of WALT2012.

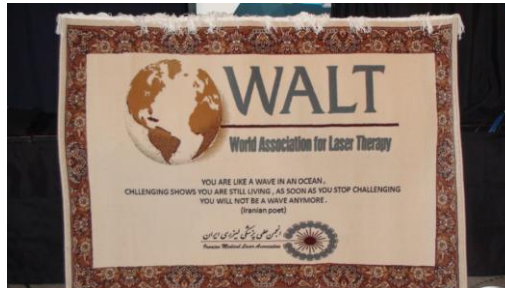


Figure: The new WALT 'magic carpet' – set to unite the world of laser therapy

“On behalf of WALT2012 Co-Chair Dr Roberta Chow, firstly, I wish to thank those who contributed to the success of WALT2012. The list is too extensive to reproduce herein but we acknowledge them as a group as follows: the Scientific and Organising Committees and helpers, the WFLD Asia-Pacific Division, the speakers and invited speakers, our sponsors and exhibitors, the professional conference organiser (AST Management), the conference venue (QT Hotel) and various event teams, the presenters on the pre-conference courses held at Griffith University (dental, laser safety and fundamentals courses), abstract reviewers, session Chairs, poster and podium presentation judges and others”.

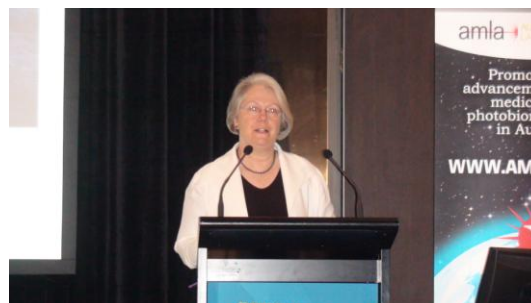


Figure: Incoming WALT President and congress Co-Chair, A/Prof Liisa Laakso welcoming delegates to the WALT2012 Gala dinner

“I've been overwhelmed by your positive feedback about the conference and I'm sure the Organising Committee would now agree all of the hard work over many months was worthwhile. Well done team!”

“The final attendance figures for the congress were: 169 full delegates, 14 day delegates, 3 Pre-conference courses and 47 Pre-conference course delegates, 110 abstracts, 13 exhibitors and 6 sponsors.”

Most reassuringly, the conference was a success financially demonstrating the vibrancy of the field of laser therapy and, in particular, of the World Association for Laser Therapy (WALT).



Figure: Participants at the Pre-Congress Dental Laser Safety course (Chair of WALT2012 dental stream, Dr Ambrose Chan behind lectern on right)

“During the congress we heard so much that our heads became full. But in reflecting on the literature when I first started on the laser therapy journey in the early 90s, I know we've come such a long way in the intervening period. We have mechanisms for effect now. We have systematic reviews and meta-analyses for clinical evidence. We have scientists talking to clinicians talking to physicists, all talking to each other. This communication is vital as we attempt to tease out what parameters are important for efficacy and I would urge everyone to continue to work in a multi-disciplinary way so that we can advance the field as expeditiously as possible”.



Figure: Prof Tiina Karu

“Despite advances, we still have challenges ahead of us....

The scientists continue to battle with the myriad parameters and models to test, and cringe at the reductionism of clinicians.

Clinicians remain intrigued and, dare I say, confused by the evidence and need help to put that evidence in to practice.

The physicists are helping us to understand the properties that result in the confusion, and will need to continue to come on that journey with all of us.

Industry simply says ‘please just get on with it... We know it works let's just do it!’

To industry, I say please be patient with all us and continue to support us on the journey towards a full understanding of light energy so that it benefits all, but most importantly our clients be they human or animal, in the fields of dentistry, medicine, physiotherapy, nursing, veterinary science or any other sector of health and wellness”.



Figures:

Left – WALT President A/Prof Liisa Laakso and platinum sponsor, Dr Mark Rogers of “YourHealthyGP”.

Middle – Organising Committee member Dr Phil Gabel and exhibitor James Carroll of Thor Laser.

Right – Dental colleagues at the William Green exhibit.

“We've been replenished by the collegiality of the experience of WALT2012. Let's continue to work together”.



Figure:

Left – Delegates and members of executive of WALT and WFLD enjoying the collegiality of the WALT2012 Gala dinner.

Right – Invited speaker Prof Mike Hamblin comes face to face with a real Aussie.

“The theme of WALT2012 was *The Spectrum of Laser - Translating Basic Research in to Clinical Outcomes*. To all of you but in particular our clinical colleagues - please do not be discouraged by the ‘nay-sayers’ and sceptics. Be strengthened by what you've heard in the last days [of the conference]. Be fearless in explaining the evidence base. Know that there are many, many people around the world working diligently to find the answers to your clinical questions”.

“I wish to highlight to members and friends the generous gesture by our Iranian friends who work towards a better understanding of what it means to bridge borders and to engage in academic fellowship and human understanding despite enormous barriers. Your

gesture of a gift of the WALT Persian rug will live on not only in your contribution to laser science but because I pledge to pass the WALT magic carpet on to subsequent WALT Presidents as a symbol of our global coverage. Thank you.”



Figure: WALT2012 Co-Chairs (A/Prof Liisa Laakso, Dr Roberta Chow) accepting the presentation of the Persian rug from IMLA.

To new and old friends from around the world, such as Brazil... I know that the advances that you and your fellow country men and women will continue to endure. You are providing the world with a tremendous legacy of laser science and literature, as well as a significant ground swell of young scientists and clinicians who will promote our mutual field. I will be visiting Brazil in a couple of weeks so I hope that I will see some of you on that trip”.



Figure: Award winners (Best Poster and Young Scientist presentations) with Brazilian colleagues

“Lastly, I wish to urge all country and society delegates to think deeply about the opportunities that lay before us. I ask you to consider whether we can more formally come together under one umbrella to more coherently advance the cause of laser therapy. It is excellent that we have thriving national organisations such as in Iran and Brazil, north America and South Africa, a new organisation in Europe, and fledgling organisations such as our own AMLA here in Australia, and of course our discipline focused brethren organisations such as that of our dentistry colleagues of the WFLD to name but a few”.



Figure:

Left - Young scientists from South Africa (winners of AMLA travelling scholarships, Palesa Sekhejane and Sello Manoto)

Right - WALT and IMLA delegates enjoying the Gala dinner

“But I ask you to consider, is this the best use of our resources? Would we not be better to be working so that we have the best communication regarding advances in research and in education? Would we not be better to have a thousand or two thousand people at such a congress as this [WALT2012], sharing the fantastic collegiality of our combined efforts instead of smaller perhaps more inwardly focused societies. I look forward to having this discussion with representatives from various countries over the coming period of time”.

(See further update from WALT President)



Figure: WFLD and NAALT delegates.

WALT 2012 AWARDS

During the WALT2012 congress we saw Prof Tiina Karu honoured by colleagues from NAALT and I(ranian)MLA, and on behalf of WALT and A(ustralian)MLA, I extend our congratulations to Prof Karu on these Honours and heartily concur with the choices made by NAALT and IMLA.

I'm pleased to say that WALT had awards to make as well, as has been the tradition of the WALT congress for some period of time.

At WALT2012, there were three awards - One for ‘*Best Presentation by a Young Investigator*’, one for ‘*Best Presentation by an Established Researcher*’, and one for ‘*Best Poster*’. The prizes attracted a cash award and certificate from WALT, and a book prize of

the third edition of Karu's highly regarded textbook ('Ten Lectures on Basic Science of Laser Phototherapy') donated by Jan Tuner.

Based on criteria of content, structure and development, evidence base and overall presentation, the prize for **best poster** was awarded to Carla Tim and colleagues Paulo Bossini, Hueliton Kido, Nivaldo Parizotto and Ana Claudia Renno for their poster entitled "Effects of LLLT in the process of bone repair".



Figure: Award winner Carla Tim with congress Co-Chairs.

Based on criteria of content, structure and development, research base and rationale, and overall presentation, the prize for the best presentation by an **established researcher** was awarded to Prof Neil Pillar for his presentation entitled: "Lymphoedema and LLLT...sequencing and targeting in the treatment process'.

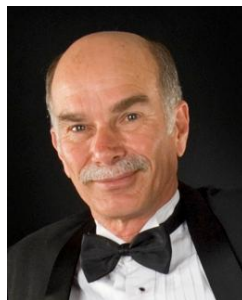


Figure: Prof Neil Pillar

The award for the best presentation by a Young Scientist was a newly renamed award for WALT. In the months leading up to WALT2012, the laser community lost a great friend and supporter, Professor Isaac Kaplan. "I spoke to Isaac some months ago when he was looking to attend WALT2012 with his lifelong partner, wife Masha. He was sounding robust and keen to come but unfortunately this was not to be," said WALT President A/Prof Liisa Laakso.

The following outline is based on information obtained from ASLMS: Isaac Kaplan was Emeritus Professor of surgery and plastic surgery and past Chair of plastic surgery at Tel-Aviv University. Prof Kaplan co-developed the Sharplan laser and was an avid advocate of CO₂ laser surgery and was engaged in medical laser research, and the development of medical laser instruments. In 1975, Prof Kaplan founded the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine and served as President until 1979. Prof Kaplan was named honorary life President of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine, honorary professor of the postgraduate medical school in Beijing, China, honorary professor of the National University of Cordova (Argentina), and honorary member of the Cuban Academy of Science. Prof Kaplan was also honorary member of 24 professional

societies including honorary President of the Latino-American Society of Laser Medicine and Surgery, and honorary Fellow of the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery.

“Isaac loved to teach and he loved to pass on his knowledge about lasers to new and young clinicians and researchers. After discussion with the WALT Executive Committee and communication with Prof Kaplan's wife Masha and his nephew Gal, and through the auspices of Prof David Baxter and Glen Calderhead, we are very pleased to announce at WALT2012 that Prof Kaplan's family has agreed to the Young Scientist award being henceforth known as the ‘Isaac Kaplan Award for the Best Presentation by a Young Scientist’”.

“I'm very pleased to announce that, for a paper entitled ‘LLLT (660nm) alters expression of genes during muscle regeneration in rats’, the inaugural winner of the Isaac Kaplan Award for best presentation by a young scientist is Natalia Rodrigo Iosimuta from the Federal University of Sao Carlos, Brazil”.



Figure: Award winner Natalia Iosimuta with congress Co-Chairs.

A high commendation was also extended to Graham Merry for his work on dry macular degeneration.

“So, my friends, WALT2012 comes to an end. Thank you everyone for making it a great success”.

We look forward to coming together again at WALT2014!

Associate Professor Liisa Laakso
WALT President 2012-2014
WALT2012 Co-Chair



Figure: A tapestry of images from the WALT2012 Gala dinner night