

Junior Travelling Fellowship program 2015 (Sep 27th-Oct 17th 2015)

The ASEAN junior traveling fellowship program was started in 1983 with the intention to promote cross-cultural and knowledge exchange between the countries of the ASEAN Orthopaedic Association. One representative would be selected from each national orthopaedic association, and the fellows would travel together, visiting each country for about a week. It has been reduced to 5 days since 2010. The fellows would be invited to witness first-hand the medical facilities, teaching programs, and surgeries at the various hospitals in the host countries. In addition, each fellow would be required to present a paper, and given an opportunity to listen to the research efforts undertaken by the other fellows and the host countries. I have the honor of being the Singapore representative for 2015. Previously, the fellows would spend about 6 weeks duration travelling the various ASEAN countries. 2015 marks the first time the journey is now divided into 2 leagues with 3 weeks in 1 year.

Thailand- Bangkok

We arrived on the first day with a welcome dinner at a Chinese restaurant with representatives from RCOST. Dr. Charn yuc and Dr. Warat. We met the rest of the travelling fellows who come from a diverse background with interests in shoulder, hip & knee, spine as well as hand surgery and age ranging from 31 to 37 years old. We were given a RCOST tie as a souvenir. Dr. Jithayut, otherwise known as Jui and was our Thailand host, helped to ease our 1st day jitters and made our subsequent time in Thailand very enjoyable.

On the second day, we visited Ramathibodi hospital that is one of the famous government hospitals in Thailand which includes a medical school under Mahidol University. They have a very structured orthopaedic residency training program as well as subspecialty fellowship training meant primarily for the local Thai orthopaedic surgeons after they completed their 4 years of residency. The hospital is currently undergoing renovation and has a new private wing. We gave our research presentations and then visited the wards, clinics and operating theatre complexes. We got to witness a PCL reconstruction surgery by Dr. Nadaporn, our host from Ramathibodi hospital. In the afternoon, we had a tour around the famous Wat Phra Kaew and the Grand palace. The grandeur of the temple and palace was awe-inspiring. On the third day, we visited Vajira hospital that is another government and university-linked hospital. We attended their morning conference and participated in case discussions and exchanged opinions on management of cases such as neglected dislocated hip and spinal tuberculosis. Subsequently we went to the OT where we observed a THR and TKR by Dr. Suraporn and an ACL by Dr. Nadaporn. Interestingly, their OT setup is entirely visible from the outside through the glass doors. The hospital has navigation capabilities for TKR and THR although they were not used on that day of visit. On day 4, we were treated to a cultural tour of Ayutthaya about 85 km north of Bangkok, where we got to tour the summer palace of Ba'an, the ancient temples and giant reclining Buddha of Ayutthaya. Most memorable part of the Thailand league was the delicious mango sticky rice that I never seem to get bored of.

Philippine-Manila

On our first arrival day in Manila, we were greeted to the world famous massive jam of Manila where traffic literally came to a standstill. We finally reached our hotel about late night. On the second day morning we visited Philippine Orthopaedic center (POC) where we met the first founding president of AOA Dr. Jose Pujalte Sr with his son, Dr. Jose Pujalte Jr, the current Chief of POC. Notably, POC is a standalone orthopaedic institution with own emergency department and 6 operating theatres. Next we visited Philippine General hospital (PGH) in the afternoon. Both hospitals were high volume government hospitals that see a lot of orthopaedic trauma patients largely as a result of road traffic accidents. There were a significant number of patients on various types of traction in the wards. Because not everyone can afford the orthopaedic implants, many of them end up waiting long period of time on traction or treated conservatively. PGH also has a nice paediatric orthopaedic ward donated by the Masonic Charities for Crippled Children Inc. (MCCCI) with about 10-bed capacity under the department care. I was particularly impressed with the high ratio of rehabilitation physicians /therapists to patients in the spine ward as well as the routine use of electrical stimulation for paralysed patients in their rehabilitation treatment. At night, we met up with the Philippine Orthopaedic Association Secretary Dr. Grey and Mike (AOA secretary) at café Juanita where we feasted on delicious Filipino cuisines. We were each given a POA T-shirt as souvenir. On day 3, we visited St. Luke's Medical center, the workplace of our Philippine fellow Dr. Juan Carlos. It is a private hospital with its own orthopaedic residency training program that is separate from POC and PGH. It is a stark contrast to POC and PGH in that it is a modern, high-tech hospital with nice spacious clinic and operative facilities. The residency system in Philippines is a highly competitive one with almost equal proportions of males and females trainees and last for 4 years. Subsequently they need to fulfill additional 2 years of local fellowship training to be a specialist. It is my first time in Manila Philippines. An interesting sight is the presence of "Jeepneys" (a type of minibus) forming the mainstay of Filipino public transportation. On our 4th day, we had a day tour in Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar, which is a Heritage resort by the sea about 3-hour drive away from Manila. We are treated to a fine showcase of Filipino history and craftsmanship during 18th-century Philippines transcending Spanish- American culture.

Malaysia- Kuala Lumpur

The next stop sees us disembarking at Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. The first night we met with representatives from Malaysian Orthopaedic Association Dr. David Choon and Dr. Azmi, at the Dancing fish restaurant in Bangsar shopping centre. Over the next few days, we visited University Malaya Medical center (UMC), Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (HUKM) and Hospital Selayang where we gave our research presentations, participated in case discussions and toured the hospital facilities. UMC is where Sem, our Malaysian counterpart, had his residency training. The hospital has a dedicated spine unit as well as an entire building dedicated to orthopaedic research named the National Orthopaedic centre of excellence for research and learning (NOCERAL). At HUKM, we were hosted by Prof Sharaz and we were invited to sit in for the weekly resident training session, where the residents had to clerk a designated

patient, perform physical examination and discuss the case in front of an audience which included the seniors in the department, much like what we were expected to do for the FRCS. HUKM has a new building for advanced surgical skills centre where they hold various practical sessions for trainee surgeons, including cadaveric training. This building has an entire level that is exclusively sponsored by Samsung. Literally everything is made by Samsung, including the HD Televisions, projectors, ultrasound machines and even the air conditioners were apparently changed to Samsung. Hospital Selayang is the newest among these 3 hospitals and they are proud to be the first paperless institution with computerised medical records and investigations. I am particularly impressed with the large number of orthopaedic technicians in the cast room with in-clinic large Image-Intensifier machine capability. This would greatly facilitate the reduction of simple fractures in the outpatient setting. We had time to visit the renowned Batu caves where we climbed up several hundred steps and stare in awe of the gigantic Hindu god outside the temple. At night, we were treated to dinner at Madam Kwans and a beautiful night view of the PETRONAS twin towers at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC).

Brunei

Our next stop brings us to Brunei, our newest AOA member. Brunei didn't have a travelling fellow so we were all initially worried about how our travel itinerary would be like. However, Dr. Ian Steward and Dr. Rashid (Brunei Orthopaedic association president) proved to be excellent hosts and met us for dinner that very night. The next day we visited Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS), their main and largest government hospital. Brunei has a population of 400,000 with about 14 orthopaedic surgeons in total (including the non specialists). The doctors usually have their specialty training overseas, with Singapore being one of their preferred destinations. Dr. Rashid himself had his orthopaedic training in Singapore. I met him when I was a 4th year medical student rotating through SGH then. In Brunei, healthcare and education is generally free for the people and the government takes very good care of the people. Islam is their predominant religion. Their weekend is split with Friday and Sunday being a rest day and Saturday being a full working day. On Monday, we visited their integrated care clinic Pusat Kesihatan Pengiran Anak Puteri Hajah Muta-Wakkilah Hayatul Bolkihah, which works like a polyclinic system in Singapore whereby the General practitioners manage the patients holistically and refers to tertiary hospitals such as RIPAS when specialist care is required. The whole country employs an electronic medical records system whereby the integrated clinic is able to link with the government hospital medical records and investigations. We were brought on a city tour whereby we visited Brunei's floating village and Masjid Omar Ali Saifuddien. Considered as one of the most beautiful mosques in the Asia Pacific, it is a place of worship for the Muslim community, a major landmark and a tourist attraction of Brunei. Named after Omar Ali Saifuddien III, the 30th Sultan of Brunei who also initiated its construction, the mosque serves as a symbol of the Islamic faith in Brunei and dominates the skyline of Bandar Seri Begawan. The building was completed in 1958 and is an example of modern Islamic architecture.

Singapore

Our last stop for this trip concludes at Singapore, the host country for this year AOA combined meeting. We had our welcome dinner at Pontini (Italian restaurant) in Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel with the SOA president Dr. David Chua and met up with 3 other Australian/New Zealand senior travelling fellows. The next day was a busy one with SGH being our first stop where the 3 Australasian senior fellows gave their presentations in ward 75 conference room. We were then led on a hospital tour beginning with Academia. Everyone was very impressive with Academia's state of the art facilities ranging from the surgical simulation lab, the critical care simulation lab as well as the cadaveric surgical skills lab. SGH was hosting the pre-meeting work shop with world-renowned Professor Bernard Morrey and Michael Mckee as part of the distinguished faculty. We then toured the private clinics at Musculoskeletal Centre, subsidized Clinic H as well as the Orthopaedic ward 76. We had lunch with A/P Andrew Tan, A/P Inderjit singh and a few of the SGH administrative staff at Straits Kitchen at Grand Hyatt before setting off for S.E.A Aquarium at Sentosa for the rest of the afternoon. At night, the ASEAN JTFs had seafood galore and drinks (again) at Pelican restaurant @ One Fullerton. A visit to Singapore is not complete without the breathtaking night view of the Marina Bay and the laser lightning as well as a pose with our iconic Merlion. The next 3 days were spent at the SOA annual scientific meeting. On Thursday, we had dinner at Halia @ Singapore Botanic Garden. Perhaps Halia is so popular that the dinner was severely over-subscribed such that the restaurant had to set up extra tables for the additional 20+ guests. The Garden has recently been conferred a UNESCO World heritage site and joins the more than 1,000 sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List. It is the first in Asia and is the third botanic gardens inscribed in the world following Orto botanico di Padova and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It is the first and only tropical botanical gardens on the list. On Friday, all the travelling fellows were gathered at a separate forum where all of us gave our respective presentations. The night concludes with the SOA banquet dinner. Me, being the local host and the Singapore representative this year delivered the ASEAN JTF 2015 travelogue on behalf of my fellow travelling companions. It was an extra special event for me as it was the night where I was inducted into the SOA as part of the graduating class of 2015 FRCS exams candidates.

This trip was exceptionally rewarding for me in many ways. Not only did it allowed me to observe the practice of orthopaedic surgery in our neighboring ASEAN countries but more importantly, it also established the friendship and camaraderie between young budding orthopaedic surgeons amongst our countries. I witnessed how a group of strangers became buddies by the end of this fellowship transcending beyond nationality, culture and religion. I would like to thank the AOA and the SOA for giving me this opportunity to be part of the Orthopaedic fraternity in ASEAN.

Kelvin Tan

ASEAN Junior Travelling Fellow, Singapore Representative 2015