

ASEAN – American Orthopaedic Association Travelling Fellowship

Dr Ramesh s/o Subramaniam
May 16th to June 7th 2008

“Hosting an AOA fellow expands your intellectual and social horizons! Too often we remain in our own personal world; Visiting fellows remind us of the larger scope of orthopaedics and the importance of our leadership and hospitality to our international colleagues”

- Dr Mary O’Connor, MD
Chair, ASEAN Fellowship
Chair, Mayo Clinic (Jacksonville, FL)

It is with these objectives that the AOA-ASEAN travelling fellowship continues its prestigious yearly tradition. I was given the honour of joining esteemed colleagues before me in carrying on this tradition by participating in this year’s fellowship. The destinations for this year’s fellowship included many prominent centres in the North East of the USA and opportunities to meet many luminaries of the orthopaedic world who hail from that region.

This year the rest of the ASEAN delegates were:

1. Dr Emiliano B. Tablante , foot and ankle surgeon from St Luke’s Hospital in Manila, Phillipines
2. Dr Pham Dang Nhat, hand and reconstructive surgeon from Hue Hospital in Hue, Vietnam
3. Dr Sharaf Ibrahim, paediatric orthopaedic surgeon from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
4. Dr Dwikora Novembri Utomo, general and sports surgeon from Surabaya Hospital in Surabaya, Indonesia
5. Dr Siwadol Wongsak, adult reconstructive surgeon from Ramathibodi Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand



From left to right : Dr Ramesh, Dr Siwadol, Dr Nhat, Dr Dwikora, Dr Ibrahim, Dr Emil.

Preparations for the 3 week long trip were underway as early as 6 weeks before. Lisa O'Brien, from the American Orthopaedic Association, was instrumental in making most of our travel arrangements and Emil helping to coordinate the travels between the cities. With the final arrangements confirmed, I departed for the US on May 15th.

I arrived in Boston, Massachusetts on May 15th. Boston is a city with a rich history inter-twined with America's push for independence. However now, it's better known for its highly rated universities and world renowned medical institutions.

We were received at the Marriott Hotel restaurant MC2 Bistro by Dr John Richmond and his faculty from the New England Baptist Hospital for dinner. Food, though scrumptious, did not figure much in our plans for that night as we sought out to get to know one another and be introduced to the faculty members.

The following morning, we were provided with a transport van in the morning that sent us to Tufts Medical Centre co-located with Tufts University. We were received by Dr Charles Cassidy, the chairman of the Tufts Orthopaedic department and his team of residents. His residents then graciously showed us around Tufts Medical Centre including the Floating Hospital for children. Historically, the children of Tufts Medical Centre were wheeled on wheelchairs out onto a ship located on the waters to the back of Tufts so that the kids could get some fresh air and get better. This ship space at the back of Tufts has since been reclaimed and converted into a well-equipped Children's Hospital.

We were then ushered to the Jaharis Auditorium in the Tufts University where most of the residents from the other hospitals had gathered for a series of lectures/talks.

Tufts Talks:

1. Dr Charles Cassidy – “ Navigating the Navicular”
2. Dr Dwikora – Non-vascularized fibular strut graft as an optional treatment of neglected femoral neck fractures in Surabaya, Indonesia
3. Dr Emil – The use of Lidocaine-Epinephrine infiltration as an alternative for tourniquet use in ORIF of forearm fractures
4. Dr Elizabeth Matzkin – Clavicle fractures : Mind your P's and Q's
5. Dr Nhat – Management of burnt hand deformities at Hue Central Hospital
6. Dr Wongsak – Accuracy of Digital Images predicted knee implants sizing
7. Dr Sharaf – Orthopaedic training in Malaysia
8. Dr Eric Smith – Orthopaedic Trauma Care in Afghanistan

I spoke of our early experience with Peripheral Nerve Block in Total Knee Arthroplasty. The talk was well received by the audience who were then interested to learn about our knee arthroplasty care pathway and thromboprophylaxis methods.



The Tufts Faculty

After a quick lunch, we went to downtown Boston for a quick walk-about town taking in the Heritage trail encompassing the historical monuments of Boston, the wharves and shopping downtown.

Dr Charles Cassidy and his chief residents entertained us over dinner at Legal Seafoods which was a short walk from our hotel. Those enormous lobsters will be fondly remembered.

We had the morning of May 17th, Saturday free. We met Dr Charles Cassidy and Dr Carl Talmo to take in the unique American experience of watching a baseball game. It was no ordinary game. The Boston Red Sox, who are the defending World Series Champions, were in action against the Milwaukee Brewers at their home ground Fenway Park. The Red Sox easily won their game but our real excitement came from joining the partisan crowds cheering on the team from the bleachers stands.



The following day we made our way to the New England Baptist Hospital for breakfast with the faculty.

Talks at New England Baptist Hospital

1. Dr Mininder Kocher - Sports Injuries in the Paediatric Athlete
2. Dr David Kim - Genetic Analysis of patients with degenerative disc
3. Dr Sharaf – Revision Surgery for Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip
4. Dr Siwadol – Accuracy of digital images predicted knee implants sizing
5. Dr Carl Talmo – Arthrodesis of the infected knee
6. Dr Nhat – Construction of segmental bone defect with vascularized fibular transfer
7. Dr Ramesh – Is distal femoral lateral condylar hypoplasia common in Asian knees?
8. Dr John Richmond - Tissue Engineering : Silk Scaffold for ACL synthetic graft
9. Dr Andrew Terrono – Current state of Rheumatoid Arthritis hand surgery
10. Dr Emil – Functional outcome of triple arthrodesis in patients with neglected clubfoot
11. Dr Suzanne Miller – SLAP tears
12. Dr Dwikora – Functional outcome of arthroscopic assisted ACL reconstruction with hamstring graft and transfix technique in Soetomo Hospital, Surabaya Indonesia.

The talks were interspersed with 2 live surgeries. We watched a total knee replacement performed by Dr James Bono and then a navigation total knee replacement done by Dr John Siliski. With that, our stint in Boston had come to an end. We rushed off to the Amtrak South Station to catch our train to New Haven.



Arriving at New Haven train station at 7.30pm, we were greeted by a distinguished, bearded gentleman holding a placard with the words “AOA ASEAN FELLOWS” scribbled on it. He would then introduce himself as Dr Gary Friedlaender, chairman of the Yale University Hospital.

He graciously arranged taxis for us to be taken to the hotel and checked us into the hotel. Dinner was at Bru Bar, a short walk from the hotel. Charming, little microbrewery with good beer and even better pizzas.

We took a short walk to the Yale University Hospital the next morning. We were ushered on a tour of the premises and met the other attendings and residents. The afternoon program was a walking tour of the prestigious Yale University where 4 of the last 5 American presidents hailed from.



Picture with Dr Gary Friedlaender

We met the residents for dinner at a Malaysian restaurant called Bentara. They were a jovial bunch and it was easy to see the qualities in them that had led Dr Friedlaender to handpick them as residents for the competitive positions within his university.

The next morning we gave talks at Yale University Hospital:

1. Dr Sharaf - Congenital constriction bands : a neonatal emergency
2. Dr Emil - Functional outcome of triple arthrodesis in patients with neglected clubfoot
3. Dr Dwikora – Non-vascularized fibular strut graft as an optional treatment of neglected femoral neck fractures in Surabaya, Indonesia

I spoke on the contribution of Singapore Orthopaedics in the Humanitarian Relief Efforts after the Yogyakarta Earthquake in 2006.

We proceeded to the Operating Rooms to watch various surgeries such as total ankle replacement, spinal decompression and distal radius fracture fixation.

Dinner was at Scoozi's, an Italian restaurant next to the Museum of British Art where Dr Friedlaender's wife works as a curator. Besides the authentic Italian fare, dinner will be remembered for deep conversations with Dr Friedlaender on topics ranging from politics to religion to orthopaedic training.

We flew into Syracuse the following morning via Philadelphia. We were met at the hotel in Syracuse by Dr Mike Sun, associate professor and spine surgeon at the State University of New York (SUNY) – Upstate Medical Centre. He took us out to lunch and took us on a walking tour of Syracuse. The local attractions we checked out were the Syracuse University, Everson Museum of Art, the local courthouse, Clinton Square, downtown Syracuse and Erie Canal Museum.

Dinner was at Dinosaur café, a biker bar-restaurant true to American traditions serving a healthy slab of ribs. We were joined for dinner by Dr Timothy Damron, Vice-chairman of the SUNY-upstate hospital orthopaedic department.

We made a short walk over to the hospital the next morning. The morning conference was an opportunity to meet the Chairman Dr Stephen Albanese and the residents. Dr Sharaf spoke on Orthopaedic Training in Malaysia and The Efforts of the Malaysian Orthopaedic Association in Lebanon.

We then broke up into smaller groups that went into the operating rooms to observe total ankle replacement, arthroscopic SLAP repair of the shoulder, knee arthroscopy and revision total hip arthroplasty. Dr Dwikora and myself observed Dr John Cannizaro on his arthroscopic procedures.



Dr John Cannizaro

A tour of the Institute of Human Performance (IHP) followed next. Mr Nathaniel Ordway and Frederick W.Werner who are professors from the IHP involved in biomechanical research showed us around the compounds and laboratories and clued us in on the type of research being done there.

Lunch was followed by the Academics Exchange conference. The talks delivered:

1. Dr Emil – Functional outcome of Triple Arthrodesis in Patients with Neglected Clubfoot
2. Dr Sharaf – Gigantism of Lower Limb : The Klippel-Trenaunay Syndrome
3. Dr Nhat – Reconstruction of Segmental Bone Defect with Vascularized Fibular Transfer
4. Dr Nhat – Coverage of Soft Tissue Defect with Tensor Fascia Lata Musculocutaneous Free Flap
5. Dr Utomo – Non-vascularized Fibular Strut Graft as the Optional Treatment of the Neglected Femoral Neck Fractures in Surabaya.
6. Dr Wongsak – Accuracy of Digital Images Predicted Knee Implant Sizing
7. Dr Ramesh – Peripheral Nerve Block in Total Knee Arthroplasty

These talks were divided into themed segments of Paediatric Orthopaedics, Trauma/Reconstruction and Joint replacement, with case presentations by the residents and discussions of interesting cases.

Dinner was with at a local restaurant called Dante with Dr Albanese, his wife, Dr Damron and Dr Mike Sun.

The next morning, we took a flight into New York City and had the next 4 days free for leisure in the City. It coincided with Memorial Weekend and Fleet Week remembering all the US soldiers.

Our programme for the traveling fellowship resumed on Tuesday morning (28/5/08). We took an afternoon Amtrak train into New Jersey and alighted at Newark. Though our next institution University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) was located in Newark, we were put up in the Hilton Hotel at Shorthills, New Jersey, an hour drive away.

That evening, some of the chief residents from UMDNJ took us out to dinner at an Italian restaurant where we chatted about resident training, fellowship training and life as an orthopaedic surgeon in New Jersey.



Dinner with the UMDNJ Chief Residents

The following morning, we were received in the hotel lobby by Dr Michael Sirkin (Trauma Surgeon, Vice-Chairman of UMDNJ) and Dr Sheldon Lin (Trauma and Foot/Ankle Attending). A short drive took us to UMDNJ where we joined a morning teaching session where the final year residents presented their research projects. Projects ranged from a variety of clinical to basic science to biomechanical work even. Every presentation was followed by an engaging question and answer session and discussion.

Dr Joseph Benevenia (Musculoskeletal Oncology surgeon, Chairman of UMDNJ) met us during the research presentations. Once the residents were done with their presentations, it was our turn to give our talks

Talks at UMDNJ:

1. Fracture of the posterior-medial process of talus : A Biomechanical Study – Dr Damian Ng)
2. Natural History of Non-operatively treated Weber SER II Ankle Fractures – Dr Anil Kesani
3. Biomechanics of Cervical Lateral Mass Injuries – Saad B.Chaudhary
4. Intra-medullary Fixation for distal radius malunion – Dr Edward J.Armbruster
5. Displacement of the Sustentacular Fragment in Intra-articular Calcaneus Fractures – Dr Robert Najarian
6. Comparison of 3.5mm vs 4.5mm locked plates in treatment of medial tibial plateau fractures
7. Comparison of Phenol and Argon Beam coagulation as adjuvant therapy for treatment of benign bone tumours – Dr Jay B.Jani
8. Late presentations of DDH – Dr Sharaf
9. Accuracy of Digital Images Predicted Knee Implant Sizing - Dr Siwadol
10. The use of Lidocaine-Epinephrine infiltration as an alternative for tourniquet use in ORIF of forearm fractures – Dr Emil
11. Non-vascularized Fibular Strut Graft as the Optional Treatment of the Neglected Femoral Neck Fractures in Surabaya – Dr Dwikora

We were then taken on a tour of the premises by Dr Sirkin. We toured the orthopaedic offices, clinics, wards and the research laboratories which were situated in another building. Dr Elizabeth Marson (PhD scientist) showed us around the complex.

Dr Sirkin then hosted lunch for us at the Priory Restaurant, a short walk from the UMDNJ hospital. Built originally as a church, now the restaurant serves Southern dishes from its premises. We were joined by Dr Frank Liporace(trauma surgeon) for lunch.

The afternoon was spent in the UMDNJ orthopaedic office conference room going over challenging orthopaedic cases in the fields of paediatrics, tumour and sports. Dr Nhat spoke on his experience with Tensor Fascia Lata flaps and Dr Sirkin concluded the afternoon by sharing his experience with intra-medullary antibiotic cement rods in treating infective non-union.

Dinner was hosted by Dr Benevenia at Chris Ruth Steakhouse in Weehawken along Harbour Boulevard. Not only did the restaurant serve excellent steak cooked to perfection, it also provided breathtaking views of the Manhattan skyline across the Hudson River as the sun set.

Dr Sirkin joined us for breakfast the following morning and we had the rest of the day for shopping at Shorthills Mall, across the street from our hotel.



Dr Michael Sirkin

We caught the late afternoon Amtrak back to NYC and proceeded to Surrey Hotel on East 76th. Dr Anil Ranawat was on hand to meet us at the hotel and we adjourned to the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) for a tour of the premises that evening.

The HSS is a premier institution that originally started as a rheumatological unit and has now grown into a fully integrated orthopaedic hospital with anaesthetic, paediatric and rheumatological support units. We took a walk through the clinics, ambulatory surgery centre, wards and the operating theatre recovery ward. It was here that we coincidentally ran into Dr Sculco, the chairman of the orthopaedic unit of HSS. After a quick photo session with the head surgeon, we then proceeded to dinner with Dr Anil and a few of the other Sports Fellows from HSS.



Dr Anil Ranawat at HSS



Dr Thomas Sculco at HSS

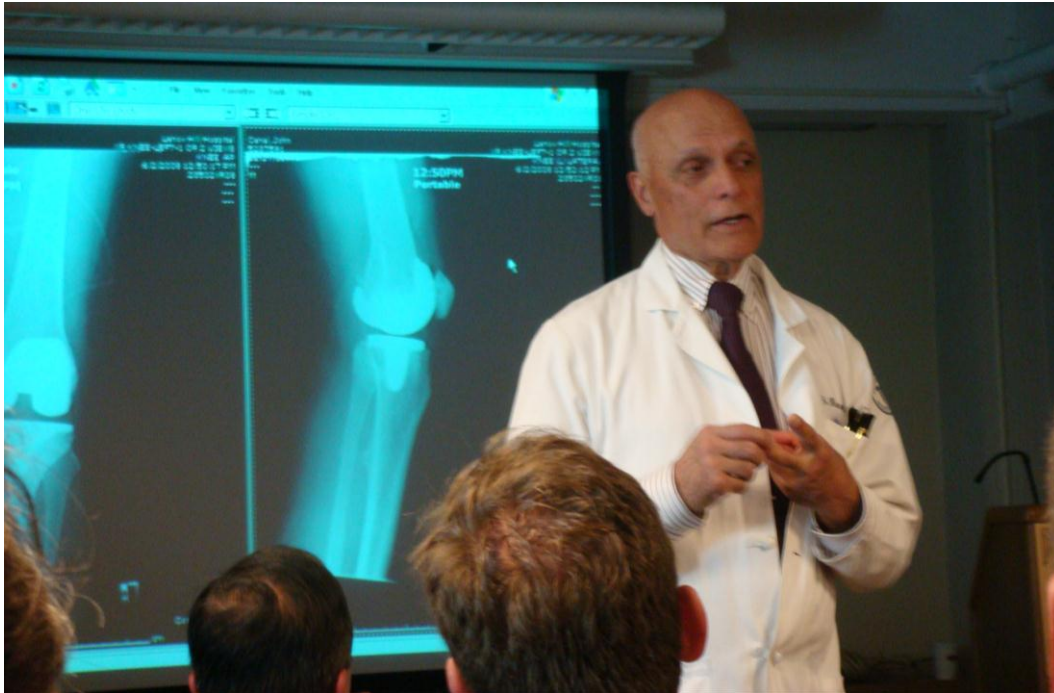
Saturday morning was spent visiting the Stryker Campus in Mahwah, New Jersey. Mr Mike S. hosted us that morning and took us on a tour of the sprawling campus. We had a chance to see how the implants were developed from design to the operating table. We were also shown around the Stryker Educational building, complete with the state-of-the-art teaching aids and facilities.



Sunday was a free day to take in more of what NYC had to offer.

On Monday morning (2/6/08) we went to Lenox Hill Hospital and met up with the emeritus Dr Chitrajan Ranawat(Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery) and his son Dr Amar Ranawat. It was truly an honour to meet Dr Ranawat, a leading light in the field of arthroplasty with numerous publications to his name, author of several arthroplasty books and designer of the Depuy condylar knee implants.

We were fortunate to be able to observe him in surgery as he performed a series of knee and hip arthroplasties that day. While Dr Ranawat operated, his son provided us a commentary of his technique and preferences with regards to the procedure.



Professor Chitrajan Ranawat



Prof Ranawat and his sons – Anil and Amar Ranawat

We had a late afternoon lecture by Dr Ranawat. He spoke on The History and Evolution of the TKR technology. He then spoke about the Common Mistakes and Pitfalls of TKR. We concluded the day with dinner at Girasole (one of Dr Ranawat's favourite Italian Restaurants in NYC). We were joined at dinner by a team of visiting Arthroplasty Fellows from Asia and Europe and representatives from Depuy.

The next morning, we flew into Quebec City, which was our last and final stop of our tour. Quebec City, the capital city of the Quebec State of Canada was historic and had a lot to offer in terms of cultural highlights, Anglo-French cuisine and architecture and scenic views of the old city. Incidentally, Quebec was celebrating its 400th anniversary and the entire city was gearing up for a major celebration due in early July.

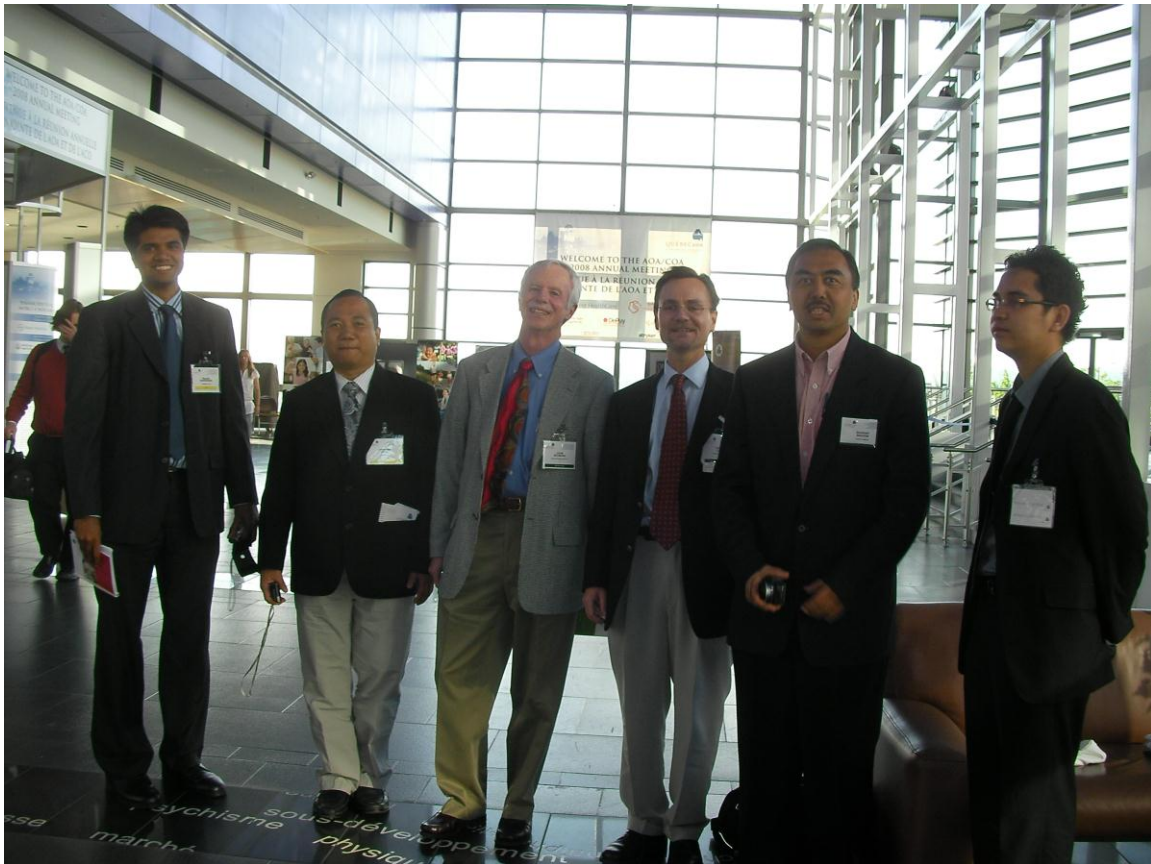


Saint Louis Forts and Chateau Frontenac

Wednesday was the official opening of the AOA-COA Orthopaedic Meeting. It was only the 2nd time that the COA and the AOA had a combined meeting and it was very well attended with surgeons from both North American countries. The opening ceremony was a solemn affair with the new class of 2007 welcomed into the AOA. The AOA and COA chairmen spoke in French and English as they officially declared the ceremony open. The various visiting fellows from Britain, Japan and ASEAN were introduced to the audience. The ceremony's final showpiece was the Howard Steel lecture given by Mr David Mendel, a historian. He spoke passionately about the early origins of Quebec and its history and evolution to date.



The next 2 days were busy with various scientific presentations, instructional course lectures and poster presentations. There were also various exhibition booths from the orthopaedic companies. We met many “old” friends like Dr Cassidy, Dr Friedlander, Dr Sheldon and Dr John Richmond again at the conference.



ASEAN Fellows with Dr John Richmond and Dr Charles Cassidy

After 3 long weeks and thousands of miles of travel, the trip finally drew to a close on 7/6/08. The fellows parted ways and returned to our home countries, enriched by a chance of a lifetime experience and having forged close ties and friendships with one another.



Tips for future fellows:

- 1) The orthopaedists in the host institutions were interested to learn about our local resident training as well as our contributions to the international orthopaedic community.
- 2) The Singaporean fellow is also an ambassador for Singapore and should be able to share our local healthcare policies, hospital setup and workflows and other health educational issues related to Singapore. I found myself being asked to discuss politics, sports and other things Singaporean to our counterparts in the US. For some reason, they all seem to remember our chewing gum bans, the Michael Fay incident and death penalties for firearm possession and drugs.
- 3) The talks should be prepared early. Would be useful to give a brief overview of Singapore, its location and what our country would have to offer for the visitor as most of them have never visited Singapore before.