

# APSS Deputy Synthes Spine Travelling Fellowship 2014

26<sup>th</sup> October – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014

## Malaysia (Kuching)

(26<sup>th</sup> October – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014)

### Arrival - Day 0

(Sun, 26<sup>th</sup> October)

We arrived at Kuching on Sunday. We were brought to the Merdeka Palace Hotel where we stayed for one week. This hotel is located in the central area of Kuching in Sarawak state. Kuching, whose name means cats in Malay language, is located in the Northwest area of Borneo Island. The Merdeka Plaza Mall is just across the road, where food stalls and shopping is aplenty. It is only a five minute walk to the riverside and Sarawak museum, which is particularly beautiful at night.



### Day 1

(Mon, 27<sup>th</sup> October)

On our first day at Sarawak General Hospital, we were greeted warmly by Dr. Wong Chung Chek and the orthopaedic department members. Sarawak General Hospital is the biggest government hospital in East Malaysia. Each year, the surgeons on the spine team perform more than 1100 spine procedures. Just then, we were given the privilege to scrub to join the surgery of TLIF in the operating theatre in the morning.



After the surgery, we were given a short tour of Sarawak General Hospital. For dinner, we were invited to Chinese seafood restaurant with young doctors in Kuching.



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## Day 2

(Tue, 28<sup>th</sup> October)

On our second day, Dr. Wong took us to the hospital in Sibul by airplane. Sibul is the second important city in Sarawak state, and located in the North middle area of Borneo Island. Before we went to the hospital, he had the kindness to show us the downtown in Sibul. In the afternoon, we observed his outpatient clinic. After that, from 8pm, we observed the surgery of PSO in the operating theatre. The operation finished at 12pm, so we had a late evening meal at McDonald's in Sibul. We stayed at a hotel in Sibul this day.



## Day 3

(Wed, 29<sup>th</sup> October)

On our third day, our schedule started with L5/S TLIF in an operating theatre of the hospital in Sibul, I was given the privilege to scrub to join the surgery. After we had a lunch of spicy noodle in the corridor of the operating theatre, Dr. Wong kindly gave some lectures to us about the technique of pedicle screw insertion. In the afternoon, we observed the surgery of PSO. With some free time after the surgery, we took the opportunity to have Chinese foot massage. After the massage in Sibul, we returned to Kuching by airplane in the evening.



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## Day 4

(Thu, 30<sup>th</sup> October)

On our fourth day, we observed two AIS operations. Dr. Wong adopted the multiple pedicle screw procedure and the direct vertebral derotation system of posterior approach for AIS surgery. I scrubbed and participated in the former surgery. Dr. Wong coached me directly to insert thoracic pedicle screws. Between operations, he had the kindness to take us to a famous restaurant, which got a Tripadvisor award, for lunch. After all surgeries, we went to the Malay tavern. We tried to drink rice wine called Tuak, but unfortunately Tuak was not good for me.



## Day 5

(Fri, 31<sup>st</sup> October)

Today, we started the day with our presentations. Our travelling fellowship in Sarawak General Hospital finished with these presentations. We said grateful farewell to Dr. Wong. After that, we went to a place in the north of Kuching for our sightseeing. At first, we visited Sarawak Cultural Village where a beautiful seaside and many old long-houses lived in by native Sarawak people are located. Next, we experienced the river cruise from sunset to night. Many fireflies were blinking on mangrove trees, and I thought that view looked like natural Christmas trees. We could see monkeys and crocodiles on the river cruise.



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## Day 6

(Sat, 1<sup>st</sup> November)

This day was our free day, so we went to meet orang-utans at the National park. After that, we had time to visit the some statues of cats. Moreover, we visited Sarawak Historical Museum, near where our next hotel was located.



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## Taipei, Taiwan

(2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014)

### Day 7

(Sun, 2<sup>nd</sup> November)

We went to Taipei via Kuala Lumpur by Malaysia airlines. We spent one week in our new home in Fullon Hotel Linkou. This Hotel is located to the northwest of Taipei city. It has many facilities, like a fitness gym, hot spa and sauna.



### Day 8

(Mon, 3<sup>rd</sup> November)

On our first day at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Linkou, we were greeted warmly by Prof. Wen-Jer Chen and the orthopaedic department members. Chang Gung Memorial Hospital is one of the biggest private hospitals in Taiwan. Each year in this hospital, the surgeons of the spine team perform more than 3000 spine procedures from minimally invasive spine surgery to traditional procedures for the most challenging spine conditions. On Monday, we managed to observe three operations. The operations were an anterior lumbar spinal fusion via retroperitoneal approach and two TLIFs. I observed the dynamic stabilization system for the first time. After surgery, we had dinner with my travelling fellowship members in a Taiwanese restaurant.



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## Day 9

(Tue, 4<sup>th</sup> November)

Today, we started the day with two morning presentations from the junior orthopaedic doctors. After that, we observed some operations, cervical laminoplasties, TLIFs, an AIS surgery and so on. After surgery, we went to the downtown of Taipei with my travelling fellowship members



## Day 10-11

(Wed, 5<sup>th</sup> –Thu, 6<sup>th</sup> November)

These days, we observed many operations. For example, cervical interbody fusion via anterior approach, TLIFs, vertebroplasty, debridement and irrigation of lumbar discitis, anterior lumbar spinal fusion via retroperitoneal approach for pseudoarthrosis and so on. I saw allografts in this hospital for the first time. After surgery, we went to the downtown of Taipei with my travelling fellowship members again. We took the opportunity to visit several popular spots in Taipei. For dinner, we went to a popular dim sum restaurant. After dinner, we went to the night market, and I bought souvenirs for my daughters.



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## Day 12

(Fri, 7<sup>th</sup> November)

Today, we had the opportunity to attend a Spine Surgery Course in Chang Gung Memorial Hospital. That course consisted of live surgery, which included the dynamic stabilization system for lumbar spine and the implant of a tantalum interbody cage to cervical spine, and many lectures of spine surgeons in Chang Gung Memorial Hospital. Many doctors from the Chinese mainland participated in this course. After the spinal surgery course, Prof. Wen-Jer Chen held a ceremonial dinner in Fullon Hotel Linkou.



## Day 13

(Sat, 8<sup>th</sup> November)

This day was our free day, so we went to the National Palace Museum in Shilin, Taipei to see a famous Chinese cabbage sculpture made of jade. There is a permanent collection of more than 696,000 pieces of ancient Chinese imperial artefacts and artworks, one of the largest in the world. The collection encompasses over 10,000 years of Chinese history from the Neolithic age to the late Qing Dynasty. After the museum, we visited Tamsui, which is located on the northern seaside of Taipei city. It is named after the Tamsui River; the name means "fresh water". The town is popular as a site for viewing the sun setting into the Taiwan Strait.



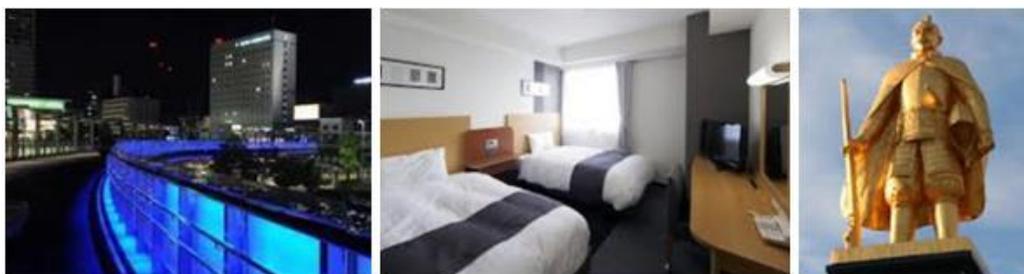
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## Day 14

(Sun, 9<sup>th</sup> November)

We went to Gifu by China airlines. We spent one week in the Comfort Hotel Gifu. This Hotel is located in front of JR Gifu station. Nobunaga Oda was one of the most famous generals in Japan. His golden statue is standing there.



## Day 15-16

(Mon, 10<sup>th</sup> – Tue, 11<sup>th</sup> November)

On our first day at Gifu Municipal Hospital, we were greeted warmly by Prof. Katsuji Shimizu and the orthopaedic department members. Gifu Municipal Hospital is a big public hospital in Gifu prefecture. On Monday, we managed to observe two operations. The operations were a hybrid spinal fusion of the cervical spine via anterior approach and a cervical foraminotomy via posterior approach. On Tuesday, we observed an outpatient clinic of Prof. Shimizu. In the evening, we were given the privilege to make presentations to doctors and residents of this hospital and Gifu University Hospital. I spoke about this APSS travelling fellowship, and the other members gave presentations about healthcare and medical system of their home countries.



## Day 17

(Wed, 12<sup>th</sup> November)

This day was our free day. Prof. Shimizu took us on tours around Gifu city. At first, we went up Inaba mountain on foot, where Gifu Castle is located. After seeing Gifu Castle, we were taken to the Gifu Historical Museum and the Great Buddha. For lunch, we went back to the hospital, and Prof. Shimizu gave a presentation about cervical spine surgery via anterior approach. In the afternoon, we went to Nagara river hot spring spa.



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## Day 18-19

(Thu, 13<sup>th</sup> – Fri, 14<sup>th</sup> November)

On Thursday, we managed to observe one operation. The operation was corrective surgery of adult spinal deformity. After we observed the operation, Prof. Shimizu prepared a workshop on the use of two spinal instruments. For dinner, we went to a popular Japanese restaurant to eat Japanese-style cooking. On Friday, we observed an outpatient clinic of Prof. Shimizu. In the evening, we were given the privilege to meet the mayor of Gifu city. After that, we were invited to Prof. Shimizu's house, and enjoyed eating his wife's home cooking and drinking.



## Last Day & Farewell

(Sat, 15<sup>th</sup> November)

For three weeks, each of us had fostered a memorable friendship with the others both pleasant and worrisome situations, confident and insecure occasions, and fearful and funny moments. Despite having to say goodbye, our fostered friendship will continue indefinitely.

**APSS Deputy Synthes Spine Travelling Fellowship 2014:**

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