

Report

18th ASEAN Senior Traveling Fellowship

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We were the 18th Senior Asean Travelling Fellows for one reason or the other. Some volunteered and some came because of national duty. Not knowing what to expect. The conclusion for all was "it was worth it". We had forged a strong Asean bond and friendship among us. We had fond memories and enriching experiences. It was an experience of a life-time worth each minute we spent together and away from our busy orthopaedic practice. Hospitality in each country was very warm and generous. The duration of the fellowship was just about right.

The travel schedule was very tight. Programme was academic, social and a lot of food. Time was too short otherwise we would like to have some exercise like golf or tennis so as not to put on too much weight.

The Highlights

Philippines : 2 October to 5 October 2004

The first day was largely 'preparatory'. Each of us coming in at different time because of flight schedule. The logistic arrangement by our host POA and the POA secretariat under Ms Jesus de Sol was excellent.

The next day, on Sunday, the POA Secretariat brought the group for sight seeing of Makati City and a guided tour of Fort Santiago in Intramuros, "the Walled City" and shopping at Shangri-La Plaza and SM Megamall.

On Monday, we visited two hospitals – Philippine Orthopaedic Hospital and Philippine General Hospital. We participated in their teaching pre operative and post operative conference.

We were treated to the local Filipinos food – hosted by POA president Dr Nitollama and POA trustees and the POA secretariat. Each of the fellows was given a token – aminiature jeepney and t-shirts.

Singapore : 5 October to 8 October 2004

We arrived at Singapore on October 5, 2004 and had welcome dinner with Dr Ong Leong Boon, Secretary-General Asean Orthopaedic Association and Past SOA Presidents and many senior orthopaedic surgeons.

The senior fellows visited all the public sector hospitals. We had lecture on Minimally Invasive Total Knee Replacement at SGH and Senior Fellow's presented 3 papers at NUH.

1. Outpatient dressing vs self home dressing in external fixator – Dr Saw Aik, Malaysia
2. Clinical outcome of surgical decompression of lateral epicondylitis – Dr Preecha, Thailand
3. SIGN Tibial Nail for Antegrade and Retrograde Interlocked Reamed Nailing for Femoral Shaft Fractures – Dr Henry Y Chua, Philippines

We visited the Research Laboratory, Tissue Bank and the Biomechanical Laboratory at NUH.

Tour of orthopaedic facilities and rehabilitation facilities at Alexandra Hospital, Singapore General Hospital, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Changi General Hospital.

Besides the hectic visits and tours to 6 hospitals, we had time to visit Sim Lim Centre to buy digital camera and memory cards, attended a memorable musical comedy "Mamma Mia" at the Esplanade and then for midnight supper at Newton Hawker Centre, visited the National Orchid Centre because of the knee interest of our Thai fellow, Preecha who has collection of over a thousand species of orchids at his home.

Indonesia : 8 October to 11 October 2004

We flew into Surabaya and then to Malang by land on a Toyota Kijang that took 4 hours because of unexpected crowd and traffic jam. It would otherwise taken 2.5 hours.

The reception from the small orthopaedic community was warm. We had a welcome dinner with Prof Hidayat and Respati and senior staff, Drs Edi, Instan from Saiful Anwar General Hospital, Malang, a 760 bedded general hospital and will be the no 6 orthopaedic training centre of Indonesia in year 2005.

Our 2 fellows presented 2 short lectures on tennis elbow and rotational deformities of the lower limbs to the undergraduates attached to the hospital. We visited the Brawijaya University and its medical faculty.

We had lunch at the Tugu Restaurant in a boutique hotel with excellent antique collections of a local tycoon and its spa facilities. The trip to Mt Bromo, a 4 hour journey from Malang to Grand Bromo Hotel. We woke up at 2.30 am and traveled 3 hours in 4 wheel drive in off trail and steep and rough terrain to see the sunrise at Mt Bromo, 2000 meters

above sea level. The sight was spectacular; the wind was very strong and cold. The very fit Respati and Preecha walked up the short steep dusty slope to the top of Mt Bromo crater. The rest of us rode horses to bring us near the crater and it was another 200 steps to the top. It was a bit scary because the walking and riding on the horse was very close to the edge of the steep slope. In the afternoon, we were back in Malang, toured the city for a while and proceeded to a country club house for the farewell dinner hosted by Prof Hidayat and Respati.

Malaysia : 11 October to 14 October 2004

Prof Hidayat joined us for the rest of the fellowship. There are about 300 orthopaedic surgeons in Malaysia (with about 25 million population) and about half of them are in government/public service. Except in a few University settings and selected medical institutions, government specialists are not allowed to have private practice.

We visited two of the orthopaedic training centers and the paperless Selayang Hospital in Klang Valley. In University Malaya Medical Center (UMMC) and National University of Malaysia Hospital (HUKM), the senior fellows visited the wards, clinics and emergency units. The fellows participated in the morning teaching session, case presentation and discussion of one of their Master students of UMMC on 12/10/04. In HUKM, the senior fellow presented a short lecture on epidemiology of paediatric fractures in Singapore. At Selayang Hospital, the assistant head of orthopaedic department, Dr Satriya explained to the fellows the paperless patient data collection, radiological imaging and retrieval system of the in and outpatient services. Unfortunately there was not enough time for the traveling fellows to cover the Hospital Kuala Lumpur which is the biggest government hospital in the country.

On the social aspect, we visited Putrajaya, the new administrative center of the country. Along the way we bumped into the previous Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammad who was showing some foreign visitors the new

convention center under construction. The team adjourned to a newly opened seafood restaurant beside the lake with an excellent night view of the new city. On another day, we made a one and a half hour journey to a fishing village called Kuala Selangor. After visiting the natural bird sanctuary and the Bukit Melawati light house, the group proceeded to another round of seafood dinner in a restaurant on tilts by the riverside. From there we proceeded to a quiet village to view the magnificent natural wonder on boat. This is one of the very few places in the world where the fire flies lined trees along the river side giving the impression of Christmas tree along Orchard Road. The city tour of Kuala Lumpur covered breakfast in Port Klang and visit to several landmarks like the Petronas Twin Tower, Time Square and Low Yat Plaza.

Thailand : 14 October to 17 October 2004

From Bangkok Airport, our group traveled for 3 hours for Pattaya and checked in at Royal Cliff Beach Resort. We attended the 2nd ASEAN – AAOS Instructional Course on Bone Tumors and the Combined Meeting of the 24th AOA Annual and 26th Annual Meeting of the RCOST. It was a very big and well organizing meeting and excellent scientific sessions. We did not get to know the local orthopaedic surgeons or see their hospital set up. We did not do much sightseeing in the day because of the very tight schedule but walked the night market, the tourist attractions and watched the Tiffany Show in the city.

On the 17th October, the end of the senior traveling fellowship, we bade farewell to each other as we left for our respective countries and promised to keep in touch.

We had wonderful memories and had enjoyed the very warm and great hospitalities of each of the host Asean countries. The fellows have all tried very hard to give their very best to make sure that we are comfortable, well take care of and showing us the best of their countries that the tourists do not get to see. Best of all, getting to know the senior fellows on a more personal basis and forging strong and lasting friendship is one we will treasure most.