

# Report

## HKOA 2004 Annual Congress

### Singapore Young Ambassador

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The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the Hong Kong Orthopaedic Association was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on 13 and 14 November 2004. The theme was lumbar spine disorders: operative, minimally invasive or conservative.

I was privileged to be given the honour of being the Singapore Young Ambassador for this event. It comprises 3 concurrent half day programmes on joint replacement, paediatric orthopaedics, and sports medicine. There were more than 140 submissions for free papers and posters from the local and regional community. This year is special for the orthopaedic fraternity as it marks 50 years of orthopaedics in Hong Kong, and with it the launch of the book 'Repair, Reconstruct and Rehabilitate' a collection of memoirs tracing the history and development of orthopaedics in Hong Kong from the 1950's.

The plenary lectures were given by world renown speakers from USA, Australia, Finland and Netherlands, all of whom are eminent leaders and experts in this field, namely the spine. Back pain is the second commonest complaint to the primary care physician after URTI and accounts for 13% of all outpatient sick leave. Listening to them speak at

the conference, I am reminded once again that we know so little about the causes of back pain and despite the many modalities of treatment, we have so little confidence in selecting the patients who will benefit from surgery for back pain.

The management of back pain is truly a multi-modality and multi-disciplinary. Apart from back pain, other issue addressed included instability, radicular pain and central stenosis.

I noted with great interest the minimally invasive treatment techniques presented by Professor Richard Fessler from Chicago, who demonstrated that lumbar spine laminectomy, discectomy and fusion could be performed via microscopy assisted endoscopic techniques, with much less morbidity and equally successful long term results compared with open techniques. Dr John Thalgott gave a convincing lecture on the utility, and simplicity of trans-laminar screw fusion of the facet joint.

I thank the organizing committee of the HKOA for their warm hospitality and also the SOA for making this trip a memorable and educational experience.