

Fellowship Report

I spent 16 months at the Stein Eye Institute at University of California, Los Angeles as the international fellow with Dr Robert A. Goldberg in the division of oculoplastics. I can safely say that this period was one of the best experiences of my life! The support from the International Fellowship Program of the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology was invaluable in pursuing this fellowship.

The fellowship program at UCLA had both clinical and research components. The clinical component including attending and assisting with functional and aesthetic clinics with Drs Goldberg and Rootman. I was exposed to a high volume of eyelid, lacrimal and orbital pathologies, with a major focus on thyroid eye disease. The unique aspect of this fellowship was the extensive experience in aesthetic clinic with Dr Goldberg which included understanding the nuances of using neuromodulators and hyaluronic acid for non-surgical improvement in facial cosmesis. I also had the opportunity to assist and perform facial plastic surgical procedures of a wide variety including upper and lower blepharoplasty, direct and endoscopic brow lift, face lift, neck lift, and thread lift. This was all a novel experience for me and I was glad to be able to learn it from the best in the world.

I was also fortunate to assist and independently perform multiple surgeries during my fellowship. This experience in the operating room was critical in learning newer techniques such as endoscopic DCR, complicated orbital and facial fracture repair, corneal neurotization and novel approaches to facial reconstruction. I also had the chance to learn some of the surgeries that were not as commonly performed during my training in India such as orbital decompression for thyroid eye disease, combined orbital and sinus surgery for silent sinus syndrome, deep orbital biopsies, skull base approach via the orbit, embolization of vascular malformations, and harvesting temporalis fascia.

My favourite aspect of the training at Stein Eye Institute was establishing relationships and working in tandem with other specialties to tackle complex problems. There was an established skull base team at UCLA comprising of neurosurgeons, head & neck and oculoplastic surgeons which ensured optimized management of complex skull base tumors. There was also a well-established relationship between interventional radiology team and oculoplastics to manage vascular malformations, with embolization from their side followed by surgical management by us. This inter-dependence allowed for improved outcomes for the patient and also served to increase our knowledge base. I hope to bring back these skills and ideas back to India and incorporate them in my practice.

I had the opportunity to attend and present my research work at multiple international meetings including the annual meetings of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery with the UCLA team at New Orleans and Chicago. I also had the honor of being an invited speaker at the Oculoplastic Today meeting in Tel Aviv, Israel and at the 4th webinar of the Asia Pacific Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

One of the most important takeaways from my fellowship has been the art of development of a personal rapport, both with colleagues and patients. Seeing Dr Goldberg talk to his patients is truly inspiring and a lesson in itself! Building a good rapport with colleagues from other departments has enabled the UCLA division of oculoplastics to go above and beyond in patient care and I hope to bring the same culture to back to India. And last but not the least, the department is a family unto itself, with the most caring and welcoming doctors, nurses, and office staff.

I am extremely grateful to the APAO for encouraging and supporting young ophthalmologists like me to enhance our experience and broaden our horizons, and enable a multiplicative effect of establishing academic excellence in our home countries.















