

Program Report APAO IFP 2022-23

My objective on applying for this fellowship and even on arrival at the Osaka Medical University hospital was to obtain a different perspective on management of the various clinical conditions encountered in my specialty of Orbit, Oculoplasty and Ocular Oncology. I had already completed a long-term (18 months) formal training in the same field and had been working as a consultant at my alma-mater, Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai, for five years; when I applied for this fellowship. So, this was an exercise for not learning basics in my field of expertise but an opportunity to sharpen my skills and aid in lateral thinking. The experience at The Osaka Medical University Hospital, which has one of the largest departments of Ophthalmology in Japan, has been so much more.



PIC: The Osaka Medical University Hospital, Osaka, Japan.

Osaka University is at the forefront of vision research. The Department of Ophthalmology at Osaka University engages in a high level of clinical activity. In addition to working with patients, all of the ophthalmologists in the department are also involved in research. The clinical practitioners perform basic and translational research on regenerative medicine of the cornea, artificial retinas, development of diagnostic instruments and tools, apoptosis of photoreceptors, and drug discovery.

The person in charge of my application for fellowship at Osaka University hospital was Dr Shizuka Koh. She was the first clinician to reach out to me for providing information about the basic outline of the fellowship and also continued to be a support throughout my stay here. She and Mr. Masashige Taki, were very kind and prompt in providing the simplest, but important, queries

with regards to travel, stay and basic living in a country I have never been to. They ensured my safe arrival and welcomed me to the department at the first day of the fellowship. I was introduced to my Supervisors Dr. Yoshiyuki Kitaguchi and Dr. Takeshi Morimoto.

In my three months at the department of Ophthalmology, shadowing Dr. Kitaguchi, was not just a wonderful opportunity to observe clinical and surgical skills but to also imbibe a bit of the work ethic and culture. At Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai we handle a very large volume of cases both clinically and surgically and yet the well-equipped theatre complex with a wide variety of cases was an immense learning opportunity to sharpen my skill set.

Although language could have been a great barrier during this fellowship but the staff and even patients were very kind and accommodating. Dr Kitaguchi also made it a point for me to attend a clinical meeting at Osaka and the 10th Annual meeting of the Japanese society of Oculoplastic and reconstructive surgery at the Hokkaido University, Sapporo. They were great opportunities for exposure to the Oculoplasty scene in Japan. The clinical meeting at Osaka had clinicians from specialties overlapping with Oculoplasty like plastic surgery, cosmetology and Dermatology which I felt was a brilliant forum to share knowledge and help each other and younger clinicians across hurdles found in daily practice. Sharing of experiences of various oculoplasty consultants from across the country, at Sapporo, was a great opportunity to learn from experienced practitioners and improve one's skill set.



PIC: Attending a meeting of Oculoplasty, Dermatology, Plastic surgeon's of Osaka moderated by Dr Kitaguchi.



PIC: With Dr Iwasaki and Dr Nakajima at 10th Annual meeting of the Japanese society of Oculoplastic and reconstructive surgery at the Hokkaido University, Sapporo.

The most impactful experience, throughout these three months, were actually the discussions that Dr Kitaguchi invited me to participate in. We had weekly discussions on clinical cases and surgeries, to share details and ideas on managing difficult and unique scenarios. These discussions not only helped me understand the nuances of certain complex procedures and cases but what was gratifying was that I was expected to give my point of view and share my thought process on management which is an excellent means of encouraging young clinicians to develop confidence in their field. I shall endeavor to inculcate this habit of healthy discussion with my seniors, colleagues and juniors even when I go back to India.



PIC: Assisting and learning from Dr Kitaguchi in the Operation Theatre

This fellowship was not just an opportunity for clinical learning but also to explore a completely different country. I was able to explore Japan and experience a bit of their rich cultural heritage. I made the most of the weekends by catching the 'Shinkansen' (bullet trains) to visit various historical and urban cities. The cherry blossoms at the beautiful castle at Himeji, emotionally wrenching museum at Hiroshima's atomic dome to the Manga and anime magic at Akhibara and Team labs planet experience in Tokyo- were absolutely worth making the journeys. Although Japan is an expensive country so careful expenditure was to be kept in mind throughout one's stay here. But this was a once in a lifetime experience and I am glad to say I did make the most of the time granted to me during these three months.



This report cannot be complete without my sincerely extending warm regards to the executive officer at APAO, Ms Helen Liang, who not only was the bearer of good news about my being accepted for this prestigious fellowship opportunity but despite my constant emails to clear doubts that arose about documentation, travel etc. was always prompt and very patient in her replies to me. She not only helped me out during the process of application to the Osaka University hospital but also acted as a liaison for all discussions regarding the minutest details with the university officials. I sincerely thank her and the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO) for providing this extraordinary experience of learning.

As I return to my department at the Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai, I am looking forward to applying the knowledge I have gained during this fellowship to enhance not just the clinical or surgical skills but the basic daily working within the department so as to encourage a habit of thinking, sharing and application of ideas to improve upon and build a better system of eye care. The Aravind eye care system has been a cradle for my growth as an ophthalmologist and has

always encouraged endeavors to improve performance for elimination of needless blindness by providing quality, affordable eye care to all. The encouragement and opportunities provided to clinicians here to have an impactful skill set are immense which I feel can be a bridge, through APAO, for other aspirants across the world to learn from.

I sincerely believe my experience through this fellowship has enriched not just my clinical and surgical skills but heightened my confidence and encouraged me to believe in, teach and inculcate the habit of lateral thinking for better patient care.