

## **APAO International Fellowship Program (APAO IFP) Report**

**Dr. Alene Ng Ker Hsin**

### **Fellowship Programme:**

CUHK–HKEH–PWH International Clinical Fellowship in Oculoplastic and Orbital Surgery

### **Preceptors:**

A/Prof. Kelvin Chong Kam Lung

Prof. Hunter Yuen Kwok Lai

### **Institution:**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Hong Kong

There are certain periods in training that leave a lasting impact, not only on how one practices, but on how one thinks, decides, and grows as a surgeon. The Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO) International Clinical Fellowship in Orbital and Oculoplastic Surgery at The Chinese University of Hong Kong was one such experience for me. I am grateful to APAO for the opportunity to undertake this fellowship at a leading centre for advanced ophthalmic care, research, training, and education.

As my second fellowship, this program marked an important step forward in my journey as an oculoplastic surgeon. It was not simply a continuation of training, but a period of refinement, where I improved my clinical judgement, surgical skills, and confidence in managing more challenging cases. The experience was highly focused, with hands-on training. The combination of structured subspecialty exposure, high surgical volume, and multidisciplinary care created an environment that encouraged continuous learning and self-improvement.

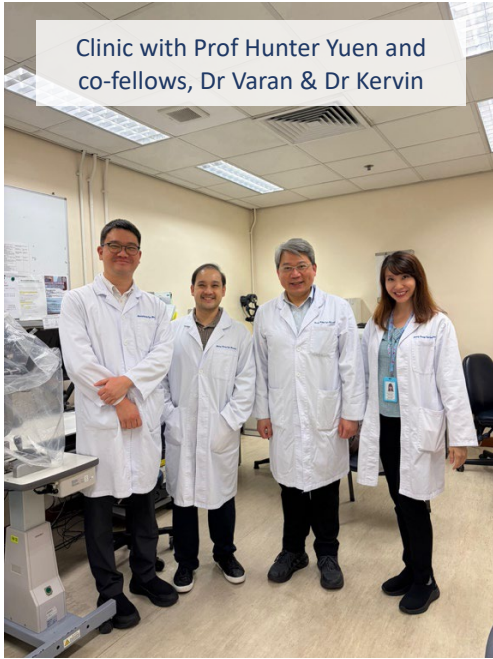
Beyond the technical aspects, this fellowship was personally meaningful. It strengthened my commitment to oculoplastic and orbital surgery and reinforced the responsibility that comes with every surgical decision and patient interaction. Training in a system that values precision, strong teamwork, and efficient care has also shaped how I approach my practice going forward.

### **Clinical Exposure**

A significant part of this training involved working in high-volume outpatient clinics, where I saw a wide range of oculoplastic, lacrimal, and orbital conditions. Rotations across multiple centres [Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH), Hong Kong Eye Hospital (HKEH), Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital, CUHK Medical Centre, Queen Elizabeth Hospital] for both clinics and surgeries provided broader exposure to a diverse case mix and clinical workflows.

One of the most defining clinical experiences was exposure to well-structured, high-volume thyroid eye disease (TED) clinics. What stood out was the consistent approach to managing low-CAS TED, which is commonly seen in the Asian population. Patients were assessed systematically, with management guided by clinical and radiological activity, severity, and progression.

Clinic with Prof Hunter Yuen and co-fellows, Dr Varan & Dr Kervin



Thyroid Eye Clinic with A/Prof Kelvin Chong, team of doctors and research assistants



## Surgical Training

I was involved in a wide spectrum of surgical procedures, with progressive responsibility as primary surgeon, assistant, and supervising surgeon.

### *Key Areas of Exposure*

- **Eyelid surgery:** ptosis correctio (levator advancement/resection, muller muscle-conjunctival resection, frontalis sling, frontalis flap), entropion, ectropion, epiblepharon, lid retraction repair, blepharoplasty, brow procedures, and reconstruction
- **Lacrimal surgery:** endoscopic dacryocystorhinostomy and dacryoendoscopy
- **Orbital surgery:** endoscopic and non-endoscopic decompression, orbitotomy, orbital tumor surgery, transorbital neuroendoscopic surgery (TONES), orbital lesion and muscle biopsies
- **Orbital trauma:** primary and revision orbital fracture repair using implants and grafts
- **Oncologic reconstruction:** Mohs micrographic surgery (performed without a Mohs surgeon, as practised in Hong Kong), complex eyelid reconstruction, and frozen section
- **Socket surgery:** evisceration and reconstruction
- **Adjunct procedures:** injections, lesion biopsies, and other minor procedures

A valuable aspect of this fellowship was exposure to a highly advanced surgical environment. Oculoplastic and orbital surgery in Hong Kong is strongly driven by endoscopic techniques and precision-guided approaches integrated into routine practice. Endoscopic approaches in lacrimal and orbital surgery, together with navigation-guided techniques for deep orbital lesions, fracture repair, orbital decompression, and revision cases, enhance surgical accuracy and confidence in managing complex anatomy. I was also exposed to evolving technologies such as virtual planning and simulation, including virtual reality-based concepts, as well as preoperative imaging-based tumor localisation and segmentation, reflecting the direction of modern orbital surgery.





### **Multidisciplinary and Team-based Care**

Training in Hong Kong emphasised a well-coordinated team-based approach to patient care. I had the privilege of working closely with multidisciplinary teams including ENT, neurosurgery, plastic surgery, radiology, oncology, and endocrinology. Complex cases, such as orbital tumors and reconstruction, were managed through shared discussions and joint planning. Being part of these cases helped me understand how each specialty contributes and how decisions are made collectively, highlighting the importance of clear communication and coordination.

I was equally impressed by the teamwork of the nurses, operating theatre staff, fellow colleagues, and residents. Their efficiency, hard work, and familiarity with the workflow made a significant difference in daily practice. Working alongside them created a supportive environment that made learning smoother and the experience more enjoyable.



### **Academic and Professional Development**

This fellowship provided a strong academic environment, with regular case discussions, teaching sessions, and opportunities to be involved in research and manuscript preparation. Ongoing clinical and academic exchange made learning practical and engaging.

During this period, I attended and presented my fellowship work at the 41<sup>st</sup> APAO Congress in Hong Kong. This allowed me to engage with the international ophthalmology community and present my work on an international platform.

I was also involved in complex case discussions through the Visiting Professorship Program by Prof. Michael Yoon from Massachusetts Eye and Ear, Boston, including presenting a complex case of trauma to the experts of the field. These discussions provided valuable insights into managing challenging cases.



## Community Engagement

During the fellowship, I participated in the CUHK EYE Learn I.CARE program, a cross-disciplinary initiative involving medical, nursing, and student volunteers. This program provides hands-on exposure to ophthalmology, while delivering free eye care services to the community. It served as a reminder of the importance of community-based eye care.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my preceptors, **A/Prof. Kelvin Chong Kam Lung** and **Prof. Hunter Yuen Kwok Lai**, for their exceptional mentorship, patience and generosity throughout this fellowship.

My sincere appreciation to my co-fellows, colleagues, nurses, operating theatre staff, residents, and administrative staff, whose teamwork, dedication, and efficiency made a lasting impression on me. Last but not least, I am sincerely grateful to the APAO for awarding me this prestigious International Clinical Fellowship.

My fellowship in Hong Kong has been truly transformative and enriching, marking a significant milestone in my professional journey. I look forward to applying these lessons in my practice, supporting training, and contributing to the growth of oculoplastic services in Malaysia. I am truly honoured to have been part of the CUHK-PWH-HKEH International Fellowship Program in Hong Kong.



Certificate presentation ceremony with Prof Hunter & Prof Clement C Tham



With A/Prof Kelvin & Dr Kenneth



Certificate presentation with Prof Hunter, Prof Clement & A/Prof Kelvin



Vibrant city of Hong Kong