ESSKA-APKASS DJO Travelling Fellowship 2018
30 May - 19 June 2018

Sydney, Melbourne, Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok

**Godfather:** Michel Hantes (Greece)

**Travelling Fellows:**
- Lior Laver (UK)
- Gonzalo Samitier (Spain)
- Martyn Snow (UK)

Given the competitiveness of the application process, being selected to be APKASS-traveling fellows is a great honour; it also brings great responsibility, since we represent ESSKA overseas, ESSKA expects us to uphold its values and the culture, and somehow give something back.

[Left to right: Martyn Snow, Michael Hantes, David Dejour, Lior Laver, Gonzalo Samitier; at the AOA-APKASS meeting in Sydney, Australia]

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STOP 1. SYDNEY (AUSTRALIA) - BIANNUAL APKASS & AOA COMBINED CONGRESS 2018
HOST: DAVID PARKER CO-HOST: BRETT FRITSCH

Sydney, located on Australia’s east coast, is the State Capital of New South Wales, with an estimated population of 5 million. Despite (or because of) being one of the world’s most expensive cities, it consistently ranks as one of the most liveable.

We met our godfather Michael Hantes at the faculty reception for APKASS & AOA’s Combined Meeting (Asian Pacific, Arthroscopy and Sports Medicine Society & Australian Orthopaedic Society). The reception was on the ‘Circular Quay’, just in front of Sydney’s Opera House, with an amazing light-projection on its instantly recognizable roof. ESSKA President, David Dejour - invited professor to the Congress - rapidly endeared himself as our host, and introduced us to the world renowned-faculty at the reception. APKASS Society is a growing international society that brings together some
of the best sports-surgeons in from Asia and Australia, but it also attracts surgeons from many other parts of the world. We were able to meet most of our future hosts during their congress, which helped us a lot, when we met them again on their own home-ground.

An important part of ESSKA’s fellowship is the scientific exchange, and during the APKASS Meeting - and in every country we visited - we had invited seminars, where we could present our own topics, on areas of our expertise and interests. Some of our presentations were:

- Michael Hantes: High Tibial Osteotomy and Multiligament Reconstruction
- Martyn Snow: Superior Capsular Reconstruction, Knee Rotational Osteotomy, Osteochondral Allograft and BMAC and Scaffolds for Cartilage Repair
- Gonzalo Samitier: Arthroscopic Latarjet, Complex Shoulder Instability, Knee Preservation Surgery in the Young Adult

After three intense days of scientific sessions, we were able to relax at the Gala Dinner, and carry on our discussions in an easier place! To our surprise, there was a Karaoke contest between the attending countries. This proved hilarious; the most serious and respected professors singing and dancing to the old classics! As for us, we thought we would escape exposing ourselves—we thought we had “gotten away with it”, and could safely hide. But then we were gently “forced”, and found ourselves up there on stage with the Thailand Team, and trying to sing in Thai!! We could hardly refuse our future hosts (a couple of weeks later!), but can only hope there aren't any videos floating around. Of course the Japanese won, they always do…those guys are authentic karaoke ‘pros’…

The farewell cocktail party was at Dr David Parker’s house, the current President of the APKASS Society and our endeavour host. This was a perfect end to the congress, with Dr Parker making us feel like members of his extended family, and very special guests at his lovely home. We had a delightful evening, chatting away and creating lasting friendships.

Meeting the faculty reinforced the prestige and attraction that our ESSKA Congress generates all over the world. It was astounding how many people are planning to attend ESSKA’s next Congress, and we will look forward to meeting them again, and showing some of ESSKA’s famous hospitality.
Melbourne is in South-Eastern Australia; the State Capital of Victoria and the second most populous city in Australia, with close to 5 million people, that is 20% of the national population. Melbourne is a very elegant and balanced city and, like Sydney, it is consistently voted as one of the world’s most liveable places.

Melbourne was our first visit to medical facilities, and we definitely made the most of it, thanks to our hosts. We began with two straight consecutive OR days; the first half-day with Tim Lording from the Melbourne Orthopaedic Group (MOG) and, the next day, a full schedule at the Epworth Richmond Hospital, the largest private hospital in Victoria, with Tim Whitehead, Julian Feller and Brian Devitt from Orthosport Victoria (OSV), all of them talented and stunningly efficient surgeons with a huge volume of mostly sports patients. We had the opportunity to see multiple ACL reconstructions using quadriceps tendon, a postero-lateral corner repair, a root-repair, and an ALL reconstruction and a navigated knee replacement. It is clear that this private group of surgeons, Orthosport Victoria, are one of the strongest research groups in Australia, and with a worldwide reputation. We could see why. They took the time to show us around their facilities, introduced their research team and projects, and showed us in detail how they combine a busy practice with quality research.

On the social side, first night saw us invited to Tim White’s house, another lovely evening with our Australian colleagues, where they provided tasty food, great local wine and charming conversation - all of them in incredible quantities. This seems to be the Australian way. For the second night, another exciting social-and-scientific evening was organized by our hosts and our Polish friend, Robert Smigielski. Robert gave a brilliant presentation about ACL anatomy and his ribbon-like anatomy concept. We subsequently had many interesting discussions about the best ways to restore anatomy in our surgeries.
The third day in Melbourne was very special. We woke up a little later - much appreciated after eight hectic days of travelling and still battling with residual jet lag - a car collected us, and we arrived at Dr. John Bartlett’s house for brunch. John Bartlett is an Australian legend in Knee Surgery and, although he retired in 2014, he remains very active in the field. He is very often invited to Meetings and Congresses around the World, to give keynote lectures about current ideas. He and his wife welcomed us, and we chatted in his library, reviewing the past, but also linking it to the present. He has great insight, and is able to rationalise many of the current controversies. We were impressed with his devotion to younger surgeons; their experience and careers. This aside, his lovely wife prepared one of the best brunches ever, making it a magical encounter, making us feel part of Australian Orthopaedics history... and of course we had the obligatory photo!!.

Later that day we headed to the Epworth Richmond Hospital for an afternoon session of scientific presentations, and had the opportunity to show some of our own work, and exchange ideas with our Australians colleagues and now friends. It was impressive how open-minded to new ideas they are, and how strong their research focus.

To finish a splendid day, we were privileged to attend one of Australia’s most important sporting events -the most watched rugby league game of the year; the very first game in the ‘State of Origin’ series. With more than 87,000 fans in attendance, at the famous MCG (Melbourne Cricket Ground), it was just spectacular, a perfect ending to our stay in Melbourne and Australia.

STOP 3. SINGAPORE  HOST: DENNY LEE
CO-HOST: DAVID LEE, JAMES HUI, JAMES LOH, LINGARAJ KRISHNA

The Republic of Singapore is a sovereign city-state, an island country in Southeast Asia. It’s no larger than Los Angeles or New York, but has a growing population of 5.5 million people. Since its independence from Great Britain in 1965, Singapore has grown exponentially, as one of the original “Tiger Economies”. It’s now a global hub for commerce, finance and transport, and a recognized leader in technology.
After nine intense and productive days in Australia we arrived in Asia, a 6-hour flight that delivered us to multi-ethnic Singapore. It was pleasant moving from the early winter in Australia to the humid subtropical heat, which would stay with us until our departure home.

Our hosts in Singapore were overwhelmingly kind. We were welcomed at the airport by Denny Lee and Dave Lee, who marked the path for our visit from the very beginning along with our co-hosts James Hui and James Loh as representatives of the main hospitals in the Country. It was definitely a stop where we felt the personal connection. We visited the OR and participated in scientific activities at Singapore General Hospital (Denny Lee), National University Hospital (NUH - James Hui, Lingaraj Krishna) and Changi Hospital (James Loh, Chairman and David Lee). It was particularly impressive seeing the modern research and technology facilities they have at their disposal, with designated staff and fellows for basic and clinical research projects. We visited the Duke-NUS medical school (NUS - National University of Singapore), an international collaborative facility with the renowned US university to support research and scientific activities in Singapore. We also met the Vice-Dean of Education, Ian Curran. At NUH, we had a useful scientific exchange, and it was a great honour to sign the Visitors’ Book, the very same volume which Watanabe signed in 1970.

The social itinerary was just as busy; especially memorable was a bike-ride around the Marina bay hotel area and its gardens, and a meal at the National Gallery downtown.

STOP 4. HONG KONG    HOST: PATRICK YUNG

Since the British handover in 1997, Hong Kong has been a ‘Special Administrative Region’ of China (Macau is another). They have a high degree of autonomy, under separate political and economic systems. Hong Kong is responsible for all its own affairs, except diplomacy and defence. With a growing population of 7.4 million (that is half the size of London), Hong Kong is the fourth-most densely populated region in the world, a fact that we could not miss.
We first encountered our host Prof. Patrick Yung in our Hotel Lobby-Bar where we planned ahead for next few days. Our first activity the next day was visiting the Chinese University of Hong Kong facilities at the Prince of Wales Hospital. Prof. Yung organized a very interesting research meeting with his young and enthusiastic team; they reviewed all their current research projects and humbly asked for our feedback and suggestions for improvement. They presented strong basic science research, which was supported by several laboratories, experimental-animal rooms and biomechanical labs.

On the morning of our third day we visited the Operation Theatre and observed several surgeries performed by Prof. Yung’s Team, including arthroscopic rotator cuff repair and ACL reconstruction. We then visited a number of impressive sports facilities in Hong Kong, the soccer training fields at Kitchee Soccer Club, and the Hong Kong Sports Institute. The institute was specifically created and supported by the government to prepare athletes for international competition. Finally, we had an evening symposium organized by the Orthopaedic Department, in the presence of many sports medicine faculty and residents. We were honoured one more time to present and discuss our work and research.

On the last day in Hong Kong Jun Li and our Host Prof. Yung organized a professional guided tour around Hong Kong Island. We learned a lot about the history, the culture and the local traditions. We admired the colonial architecture, a mix of tall skyscrapers with narrow streets and temples. We were instructed on the world of Chinese medicine, herbs, cooking ingredients and dried seafood, including snakes, gators and sea cucumbers, believed by many to improve "performance" and prolong life ...

STOP 5. BANGKOK (THAILAND) HOST: BANCHA CHERNCHUJIT CO-HOST: SOMSAK KUPTNIRATSAIKUL, NADHAPORN SAENGPEITCH

Bangkok is the capital and the largest city of Thailand; located at the Southeast end of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, and a special administrative area with over 8 million
people (13 percent of the country’s population)...all of which means there is no chance to get bored in this city.

From the very beginning we could feel the friendly and fun-loving culture of Thailand. On our arrival at the Airport, Dr Nadhaporn Saengpetch and some of his team were there to welcome us personally. This was very much appreciated. They escorted us to our hotel, and then took us to a welcome dinner, where we met Dr. Somsak Kuptniratsaikul, the president of the Thai Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (TOSSM). We had a wonderful evening and were able to taste the famous Thai Cuisine for the first time, through lightly prepared dishes with strong aromatic components and a spicy edge.

The next day we had a short bike-tour in the Wachira Benchathat Park, before heading for the famous Chatuchak Weekend Market, where we deliberately lost ourselves for a couple of hours in its innumerable and intricate alleys and corners. At the end of the day, we had a pleasant dinner with Dr Nadhaporn Saengpetch and most of the young members of his department - the next generation of Thailand’s orthopaedic surgeons.

On our third day in Bangkok, we finally reunited with our already good friend and karaoke partner (from Sydney) Prof. Bancha Chernchujitt at Thammasat University Hospital. We had a very interesting morning conference with the staff, residents and students. We were briefly introduced to the Dean who kindly welcomed us and then moved to the OR where Dr. Bancha prepared a very interesting surgical session including a PCL reconstruction with autologous peroneus longus tendon using a transeptal portal approach and an arthroscopic Bankart operation in a supine position!! and also a Rotator cuff repair. We had the pleasure of picking Dr. Chernchujitt’s brains and discussing cases with him, and he impressed us with his unique approach, his surgical experience and skills.

Later that day we went sight-seeing around the ancient Ayutthaya Province.

On our last day we had time for last minute shopping before each of us returned home. We arranged to meet one more time, all together, and this was an emotional
encounter because we knew that we wouldn’t be seeing each other for some time. Our group had ‘clicked’ right from the beginning, and then had so many great moments together, so many good jokes and good times. We became a close-knit group, and we will share our trip-stories forever!

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"To conclude, we can’t thank enough the ESSKA Board, APKASS Society and DJO for this unique opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime trip. Learning, exchange-of-experience, friendship and companionship were inter-twined, and they will outlast our careers. Thanks to Prof. Hantes for being such a wonderful godfather and a dear friend, to all our hosts and their families, to Jun Li for co-ordinating this fellowship, and all the others who made this special trip possible. And also thanks to our families, for putting up with our extended absence! We are looking forward to seeing you all again, and we are looking forward to becoming hosts ourselves, and spreading the ESSKA spirit. It’s our turn now!!"