It was my honour to represent Hong Kong as the Young Ambassador at the 20th Biennial Congress of the Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association (APOA) held in Antalya, Turkey from 8th – 14th April 2018.

The Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association was established in 1962 as West Pacific Orthopaedic Association with Hong Kong as one of its founding members. Research and development in treating tuberculosis of spine, advancements in hand and microsurgery and emergence of joint replacement surgery within the Asia Pacific region necessitated the development of professional body that could share their skills and experience unhindered by nation or institution, thus APOA was formed. Since then, APOA has developed into one of the largest orthopaedic associations in the world with 19 member chapters including Australia, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey and Vietnam, with over 40000 members.

On our first day of arrival at Antalya, we received a warm welcome by Prof Haluk Ozcanli and Prof Alpay Meter Ozenci at our hotel, Bellis Hotel, an all inclusive beach resort adjacent to the congress venue. I met up with APOA young ambassadors from nine different countries: Sam Adie (Australia), Sharif Ahmed Jonayed (Bangladesh), Raja Bhaskar (India), Mohammad Adib Khumaedi (Indonesia), Kenji Kawamura (Japan), Shams Amir(Malaysia), Ayeesha Saeed(Pakistan) and Yavuz Saglam (Turkey). There were two EFORT fellows: Kar Har Teoh (United Kingdom) and Michiel Siebelt (Netherlands); and also two SICOT fellows: Vishnu Senthil Kumar (India) and Tarun Verma (India). In total we were a group of 13 attending the APOA Young Ambassador Programme.
On the second and third days (9th and 10th April), we attended the hospital visit at the Antalya Training and Research Hospital (Antalya Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesi). Even before the program, the visit was one of programs I highly anticipated even before the trip as this was my first time observing live surgery outside of Hong Kong. The hospital was the biggest public hospital within Antalya. Dr Ozkan Kose, associate professor and head of Orthopaedics catered to all our needs.

Figure 1 Young Ambassadors’ Hospital Visit

Figure 2 Observing surgery at the Antalya Training and Research Hospital
We were able to observe surgeries across various specialities in different operation rooms ranging from trauma, joint replacement, hand surgery to arthroscopic surgery. Most of the operations were rather complex and rare eg intercarpal fusion for Kienboch’s Disease, bone graft for scaphoid non-union, Masquelet technique for infected tibial pseudoarthrosis. For my subspeciality of joint replacement surgery, I was able to observe a mobile bearing unicompartmental knee arthroplasty and a second stage revision total hip replacement after antibiotic cement spacer, which was an eye opening experience. Apart from observing surgery, we were also allowed to visit the various facilities within the hospital including the wards, emergency department and clinics. The more I understand the Turkish medical systems, the more I can reflect and think of ways to improve our local health care system.

After the hospital visits, Dr Ozkan Kose generously gave us a tour around the old city district of Antalya. Excellent weather against the scenic coastline of Antalya made us want to stay as long as we could.

Throughout the fourth to sixth day (11th – 13th April), we attended the main event- the APOA congress which was held at the Sueno Belek Congress Centre. I attended the free paper session for joint replacement surgery where my colleague Dr CH Yan presented his randomized controlled trial on “Body Exhaust System in primary total knee arthroplasty”. Other instructional lectures in arthroplasty included “Cementing the Perfect Hip” by Prof David Choon, which was full of educational value. However, the two lectures that enlightened me the most were the keynote lecture “Revival and
Renewal” by Prof. Eiji Itoi and the Plenary Lecture “Medicine for Whose Benefit” by Prof Shanmuganath Rajesekaran.

Prof Itoi shared with us the journey of Japan as a nation working together after the devastating natural disaster of the Tōhoku earthquake, Tsunami and Fukushima nuclear accident. Although the lecture focuses less on medical facts, it reminds us that working as orthopaedic surgeons, whatever the difficulties we may encounter, they can always be overcome by teamwork and perseverance.

Prof Rajesekaran’s lecture takes a different perspective on modern medicine with particular emphasis on ethics, reminding us once again the Hippocratic Oath. That we should take into top priority the well-being of our patients, rather than personal gain in terms of publications, monetary gain and fame. The lecture was truly inspirational.

Another highlight of the APOA congress was the Young Ambassadors’ Session which was held on the 12th April. After an introduction by the Immediate Past President of APOA Prof Ted Mah and APOA President Prof David Choon, each of the 13 young ambassadors had an opportunity to present their own research. My presentation was on “Patellofemoral Crepitus after Total Knee Replacement”, with correlation of audible patellofemoral crepitus to symptoms after total knee arthroplasty. The session was followed by an Young Ambassadors’ evening banquet where our young ambassadors were able to meet with presidents of various APOA chapters which provided an excellent platform for networking and experience sharing.
On the last day of program, we were privileged to a private tour to the historical amphitheatre of Aspendos and the ancient Roman city of Perge. We were able to understand Turkish culture and heritage through interaction with locals over Turkish coffee and Turkish tea. The evening was capped off with the APOA congress dinner where we were presented with our awards on stage in front of all the presidents of various associations.
The APOA young ambassadors' program was an invaluable experience. The catering to the younger generation has encouraged a line of succession for years to come while the friendship we gained will be cherished for a lifetime.
Last but not least, I would like to thank the APOA, in particular Prof David Choon, APOA president, and Dr Jamal Ashraf, APOA general secretary, for their excellent leadership and vision to promote the association within the young budding surgeons. I look forward to meeting you all again at the next APOA congress.

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APOA Young Ambassador 2018, Hong Kong