

APSS Depuy Synthes Spine Travelling Fellowship 2014 report

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It was a great feeling when I received the email from the APOA secretariat regarding the successful outcome of my application for the coveted APSS spine travelling fellowship 2014. I was to visit Malaysia, Taiwan and Japan for a week each and my co-fellows would be from Hong Kong, Nepal and Japan. I looked forward to the same and got down to obtaining the travel visas and the air tickets and I would like to place on record the untiring efforts of Ms Cheryl Low who was always there to sort out any issues.

KUCHING, MALAYSIA 26TH OCT-2ND NOV

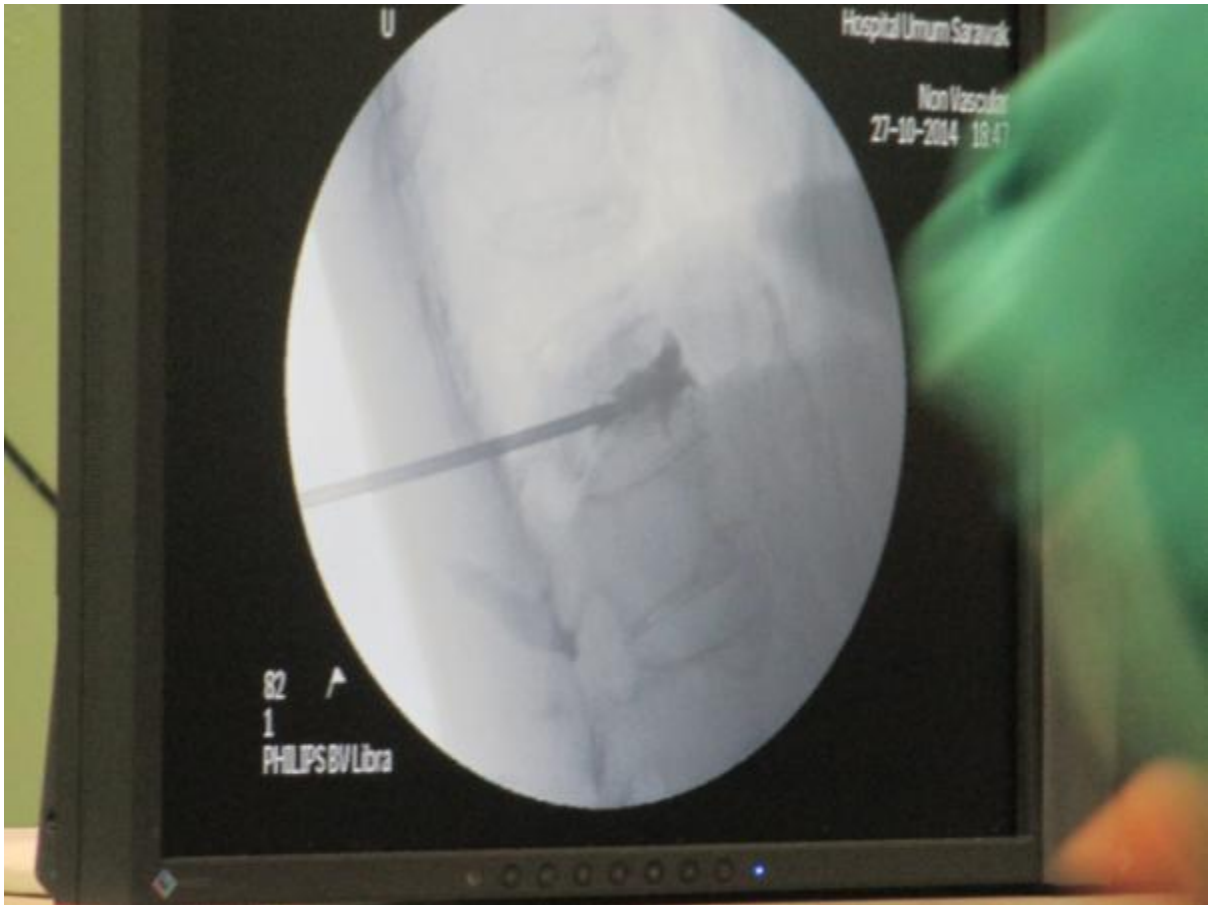
The fellowship would start on Monday, the 26th of October 2014 and I left for Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia from New Delhi, India and reached on 25th. It was a long and tiring journey but I could not sleep on the flight from the excitement. The travel arrangements made for us were immaculate and I was picked up at the airport and checked into my hotel which was walking distance from the riverfront. I spent the day strolling around the riverfront and soaked in the sun. The program schedule for us had already been communicated by email and we were to start on Monday with Dr Wong at Sarawak General Hospital.



It was an early morning start and I met for the first time with my co-fellows after breakfast. We were taken to the Saravak General hospital which was nearby and went to the OT. Dr Wong we were

told was on his way back from a course in Hong Kong and in his absence we would be following Dr Bryan. There were 5 cases scheduled for the day including a TLIF, 2 cases of vertebroplasty and another TLIF. Dr Wong joined us midway and it was a pleasure to interact with him. He explained to us the modification in his technique to place pedicle screw where he inserts the screws without much soft tissue dissection to prevent blood loss and save operating time without compromising on the outcome. In between cases he treated us to authentic Malaysian cuisine at the Sarawak club which was an impressive colonial setup. We returned in the evening to the hotel and in the evening we were treated to some Chinese seafood and met the other doctors from the department.





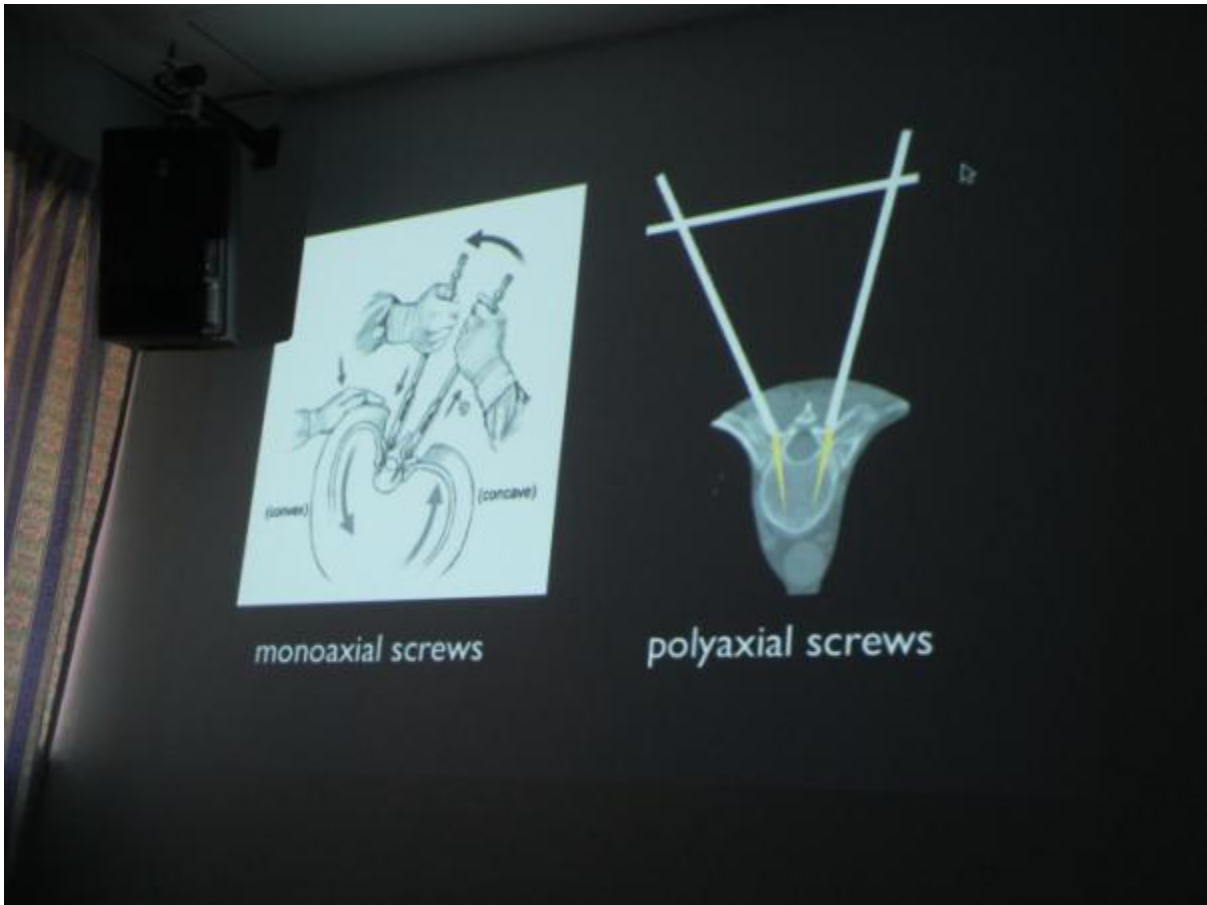
On the second day we accompanied Dr Wong to Sibul which is the second largest town in the state of Sarawak. After a brief but delightful tour of the pier and market, he took us to the outpatient at the Sibul hospital. His team worked like a clockwork to workup and see the spine patients. The staff at the hospital was very friendly and welcomed us all. In the evening Dr Wong had to operate a private patient of ankylosing spondylosis with a pseudoarthrosis. The case started at 8 pm and went on till around 1am. We were exhausted by the time it finished and left for the hotel at Sibul before the case ended.

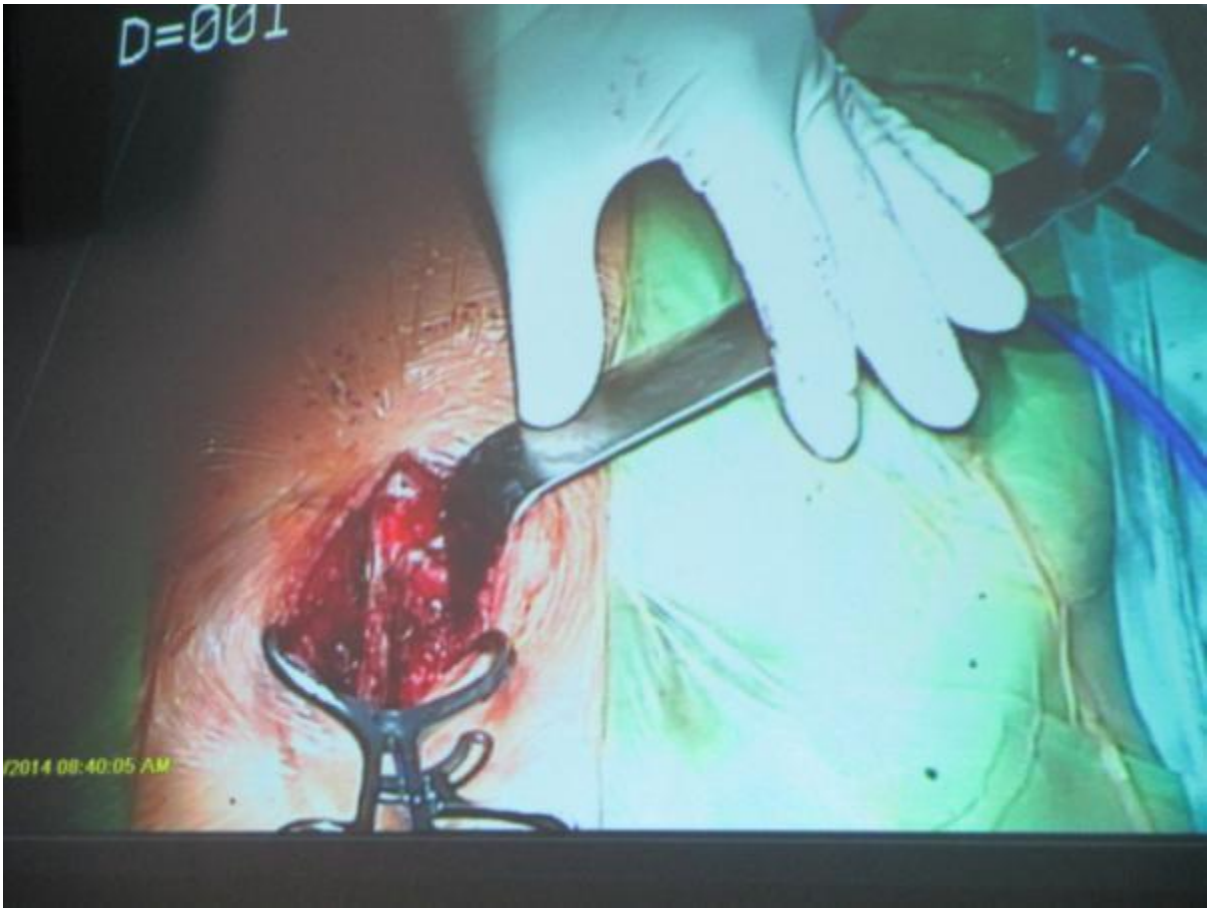






It was an early start again next morning and this time it was a TLIF. Dr Wong made arrangements for some of us to scrub and the rest observed him via a live video projection. I was touched to see the efforts that Dr Wong put in to educate us and I will be indebted to him for the same. He is an excellent teacher and ensured that all of us understood the concept that he was trying to communicate. Following the surgery, and in between cases he presented to us a few lectures on the rationale of using polyaxial screws in the deformity cases. On the way back to the airport, being tired he insisted that we all try the Chinese foot massage therapy and we all enjoyed the same.









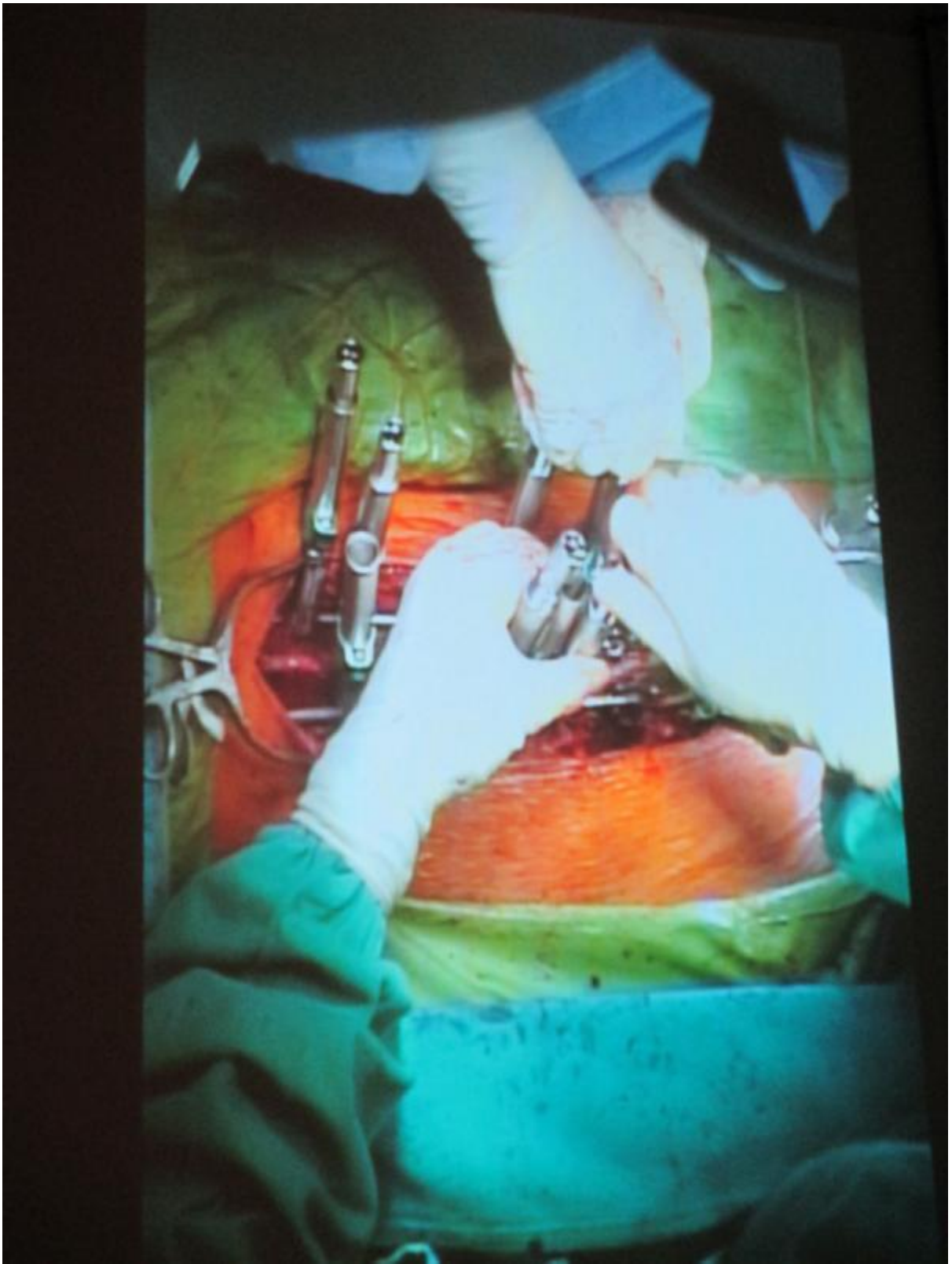
We were back in Kuching on Thursday and again it was an early start with 2 cases of AIS lined up. Dr Wong gave the opportunity to all 4 of us to scrub and try our hand at putting the pedicle screws in these cases using the funnel technique. It was a great experience and I hope to use it for my patients benefit upon return to my country. After a long and tiring day, the evening was spent unwinding in the company of Dr Wong and Dr Bryan at one of the upmarket pubs.



S.I.V.I.N.D.I.N.G

PHOTOGRAPHY - MEDICAL X-RAY DEPARTMENT
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The last official day for us at the hospital was scheduled to be for our presentations to the spine unit of Sarawak general hospital. I presented my work on instrumented decompression and global fusion using an all posterior approach in patients with tuberculosis of the spine which was well appreciated by all. The afternoon was planned as a day of relaxation and sightseeing for us by visiting the Sarawak Cultural village first followed by a boat ride to the rivermouth and see some wildlife. It was a great insight into the life and times of the tribes of Borneo at the Sarawak cultural village and these memories we would cherish for the rest of our lives. To top it up there was an evening sunset cruise and we returned fulfilled to our hotels.









Saturday was planned as a free day for us and I spent the day visiting the Sarawak National museum which was close to my hotel. The evening was spent relaxing at the riverfront and packing. After a very successful visit to Sarawak it was time to travel to Taiwan for the next leg of our fellowship.



While 3 of my co-fellows reached Taiwan on Sunday itself, I was to spend Sunday in Kuala Lumpur and reach Taipei on Monday. This happened as the tickets arranged by APSS were cheapest by following this schedule. So while we started out together from Kuching, I stayed back in Kuala Lumpur

while Ryoji and Dipak went on to Taipei. I spent the day sightseeing in KL and visited the Petronas Towers, KL Tower and the National Mosque which are landmarks for the city.

LINKOU, TAIWAN FROM 2ND NOV-9TH NOV

I took the early morning flight from Kuala Lumpur for Taipei and reached the hotel in the afternoon.

The hotel was close to Chung Gung Hospital where Prof. Wen-Jer Chen was our local host. Chung Gung hospital is a private hospital and has a sprawling campus. As it was already late afternoon by the time I checked in, I waited for my co-fellows. We got together in the evening and had dinner at a local seafood restaurant there before returning.

Next day morning I reached the hospital and was amazed to see the huge building. It would have been easy for us to get lost but my colleagues had been briefed earlier and guided us to the conference room for the orthopaedic department. The Chung Gung hospital has 10 spine surgeons and 100 ORs!!! There was a morning seminar where we were greeted by Prof Chen and then the orthopaedic residents presented on an Orthopaedic topic followed by a journal club. The communication unfortunately was in Chinese but the slides were in English. Following the morning presentation, we went to the OR where there were 4 spine theaters functional. We saw a number of cases being performed including scoliosis, PLIF and TLIF. The OT ended around 5 pm and we spent the evening travelling to Taipei. We visited the Shilin night market and roamed around. Dinner was Takayakei at the night market where the food is cooked right in front of you! We all enjoyed that very much and returned to our hotel.





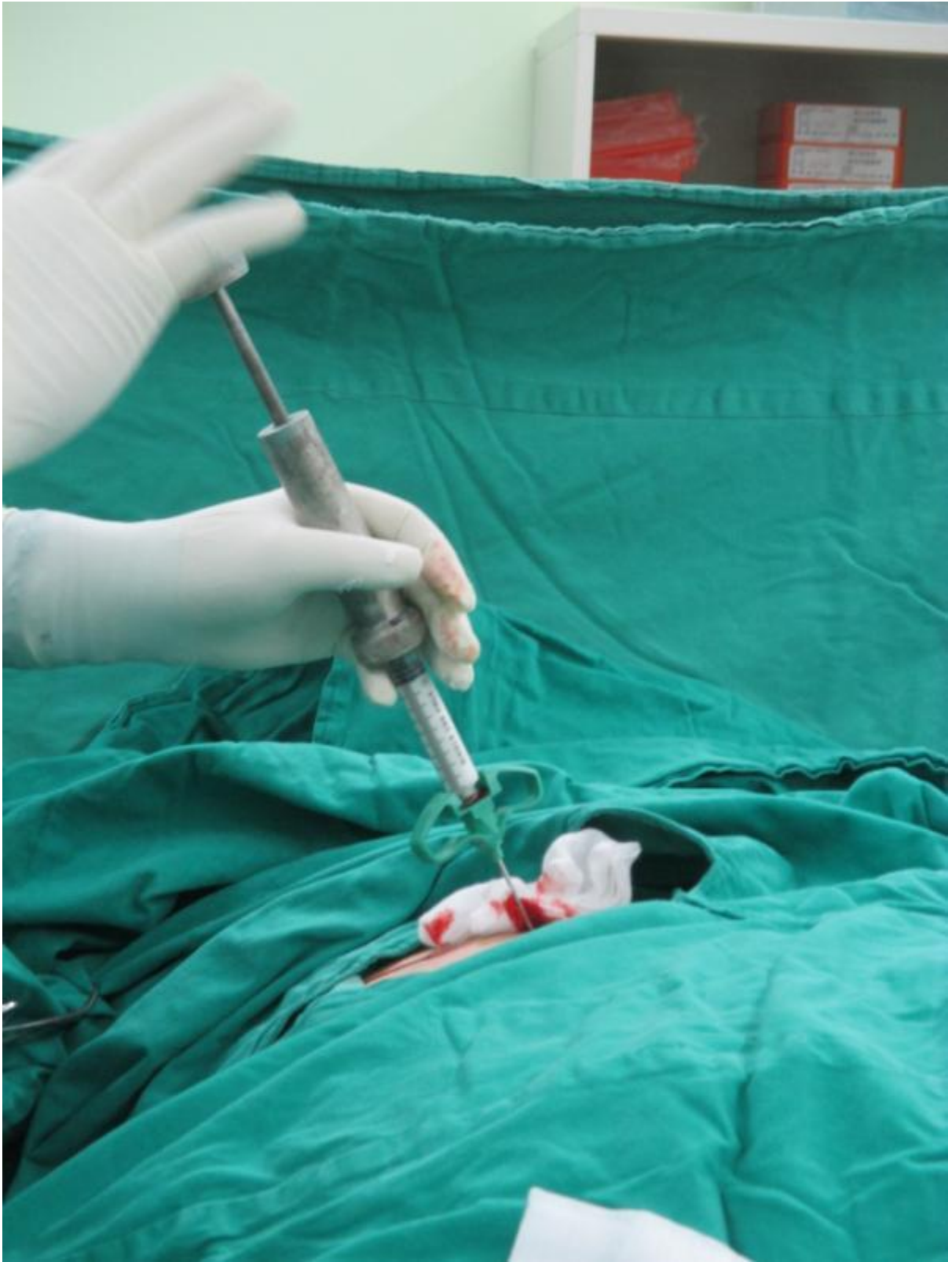


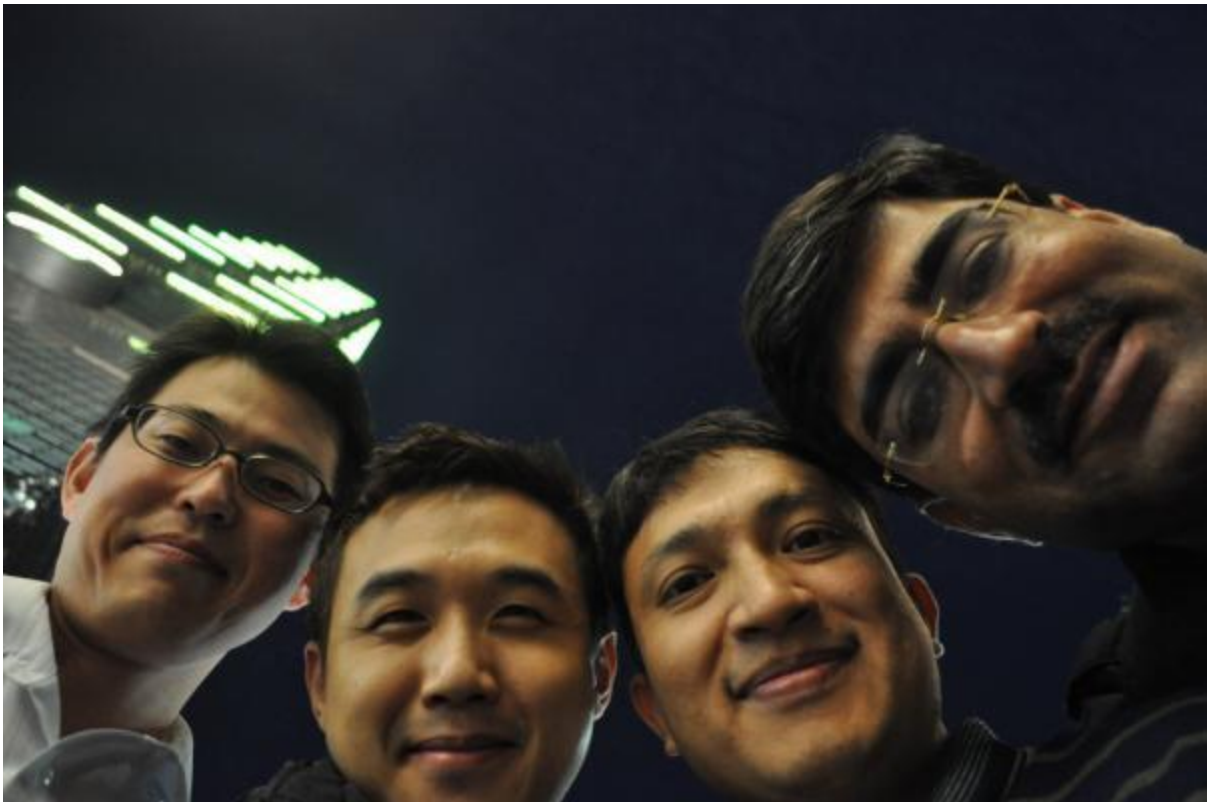






Wednesday morning was observing ACDF TLIF, PLIF, vertebroplasty being performed. It was amazing to see the sheer number of procedures being performed. In the evening we went sightseeing and saw the Taipei 101 and had dinner at one of the best Dim Sum restaurants.







Thursday morning we attended the spine unit weekly meet where the cases for the past week and coming week were discussed. It was amazing to know that in the past week they had operated upon 47 cases!! This speaks volumes about the variety of cases being done at this centre. This was followed by OT where we saw an OYL removal, T9,10 tumor mets stabilisation, TLIF and a cervical decompression and stabilisation being performed.



On Friday there was an operative spine course on Dynamic spine stabilisation and trabecular mesh cages being held with live surgery at the Chung Gung hospital. There were a number of delegates who attended. The language of the course was Mandarin so was disappointed. However slides of all speakers were in English so we could follow what was being said. There were a number of talks on Dynamic spine stabilization and adjacent spine disease. In the evening we were treated to a Banquet by the whole department and we thank Prof Chen for all the efforts to make our stay comfortable and memorable.







Saturday was a free day for us so we decided to go to the National Palace museum at Taipei where artefacts kept date back to more than 8000 years of Chinese history!! It is a sprawling campus and we spent the whole morning going from one gallery to another. In the afternoon we took the MRT to go to Tamsui which is the river mouth to see the sunset and enjoy the street market and street performers.

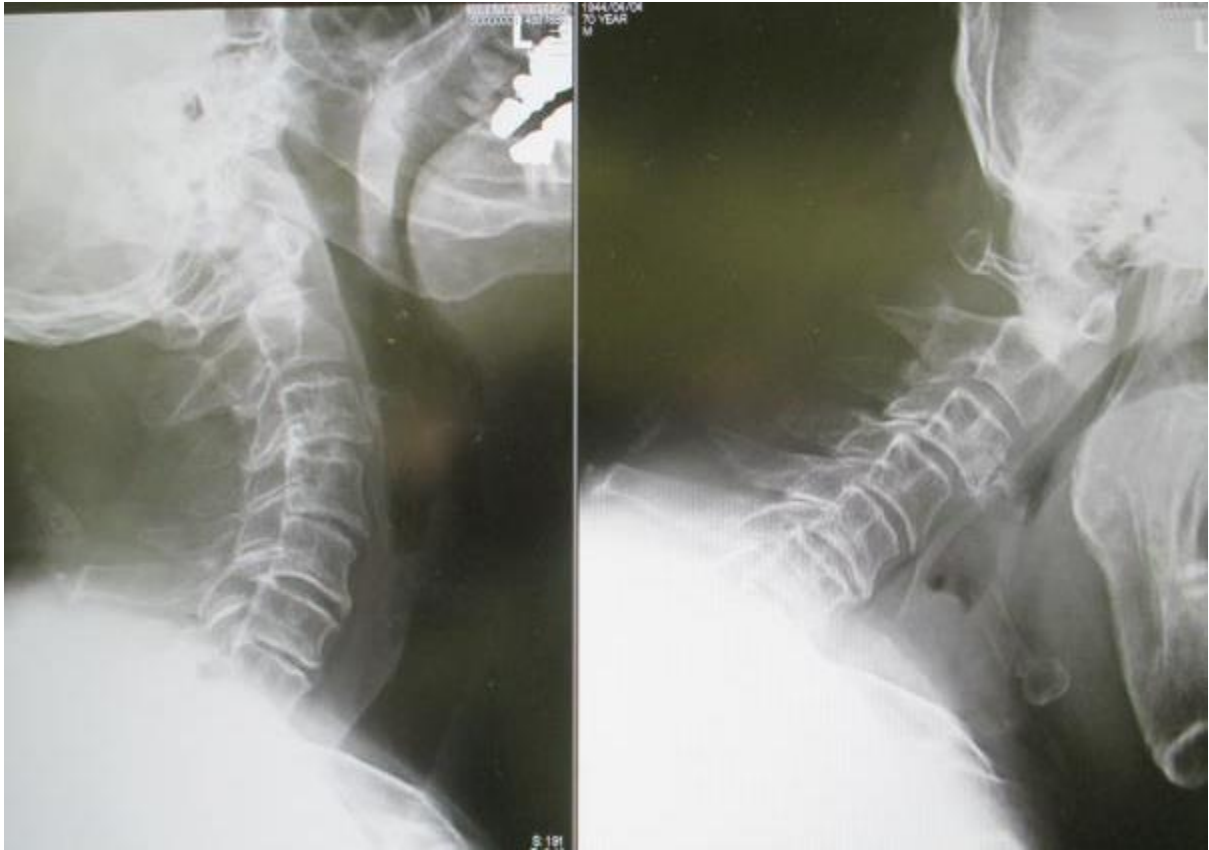


GIFU, JAPAN FROM 9TH-16TH NOV

On Sunday, we took the flight to Nagoya, Japan and then the train to Gifu which would be our home for the 3rd week of our fellowship. It is a smaller town compared to Taipei and much colder. On Monday morning we were picked up from the hotel and reached the Gifu municipal hospital which is a 500 bedded public hospital. We were welcomed by Prof Katsuji Shimizu and his team. He had arranged for a separate room for us with lockers and I thought that was very thoughtful and kind of him. He showed us around the hospital and then we went to the theatre where we saw a case of anterior decompression and fibular grafting+ cage for cervical myelopathy (hybrid spinal fusion) followed by posterior foraminotomy for cervical radiculopathy.









Tuesday morning we accompanied Prof Shimizu in his out patient clinic and saw him interact with and examine his patients. In the evening we made a presentation to the Orthopaedic department on the various aspects of Orthopaedic training and healthcare in our individual countries and also shared our experiences on this fellowship.

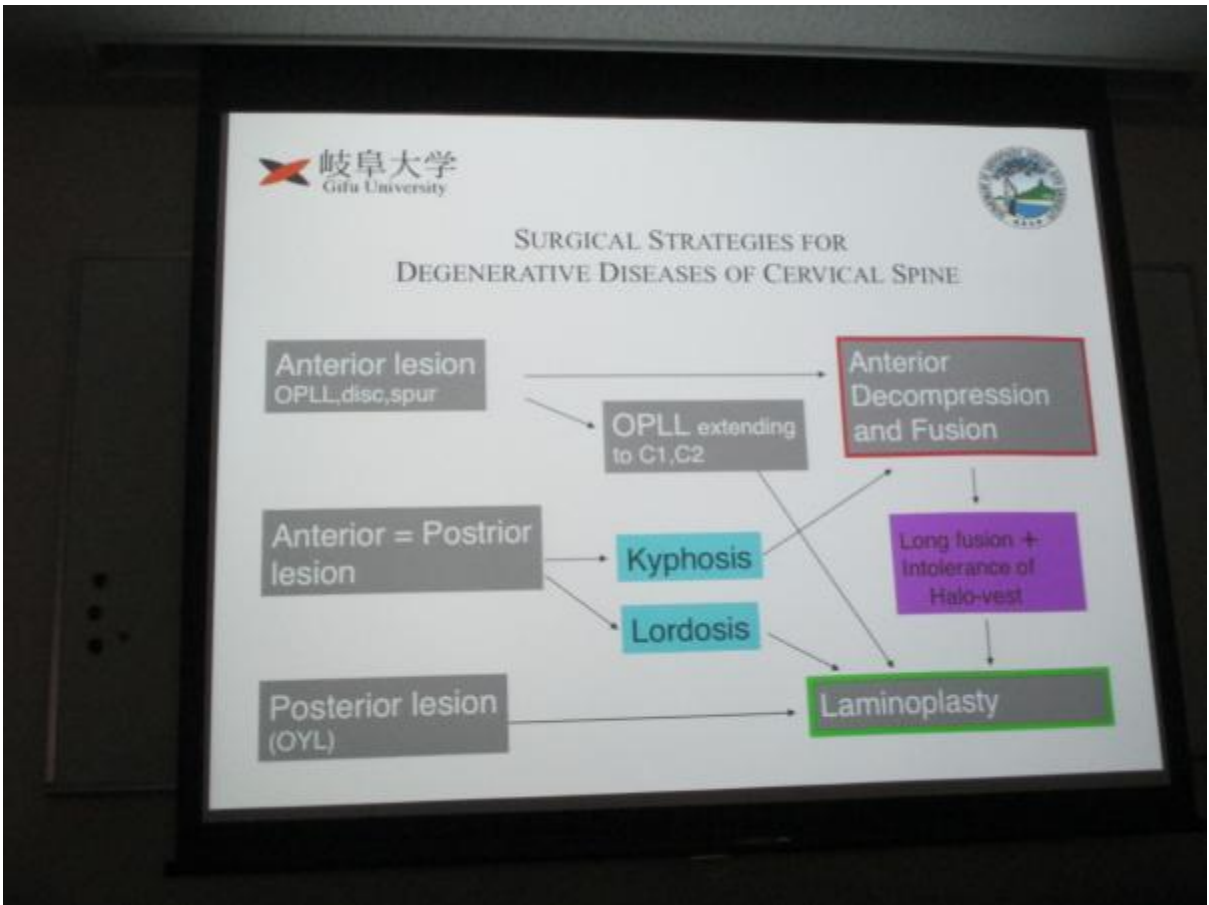




Wednesday morning was planned for a trip to the Gifu castle by Prof Shimizu. He picked us up from the hotel and was our guide for the trek up to the Gifu castle. We enjoyed the breathtaking views from the top. We returned to the hospital for lunch which was followed by a lecture by Prof Shimizu on anterior cervical surgery. To end the day we went visiting the old town and enjoyed taking a bath at the 'Onsen' next to the Nagara river.



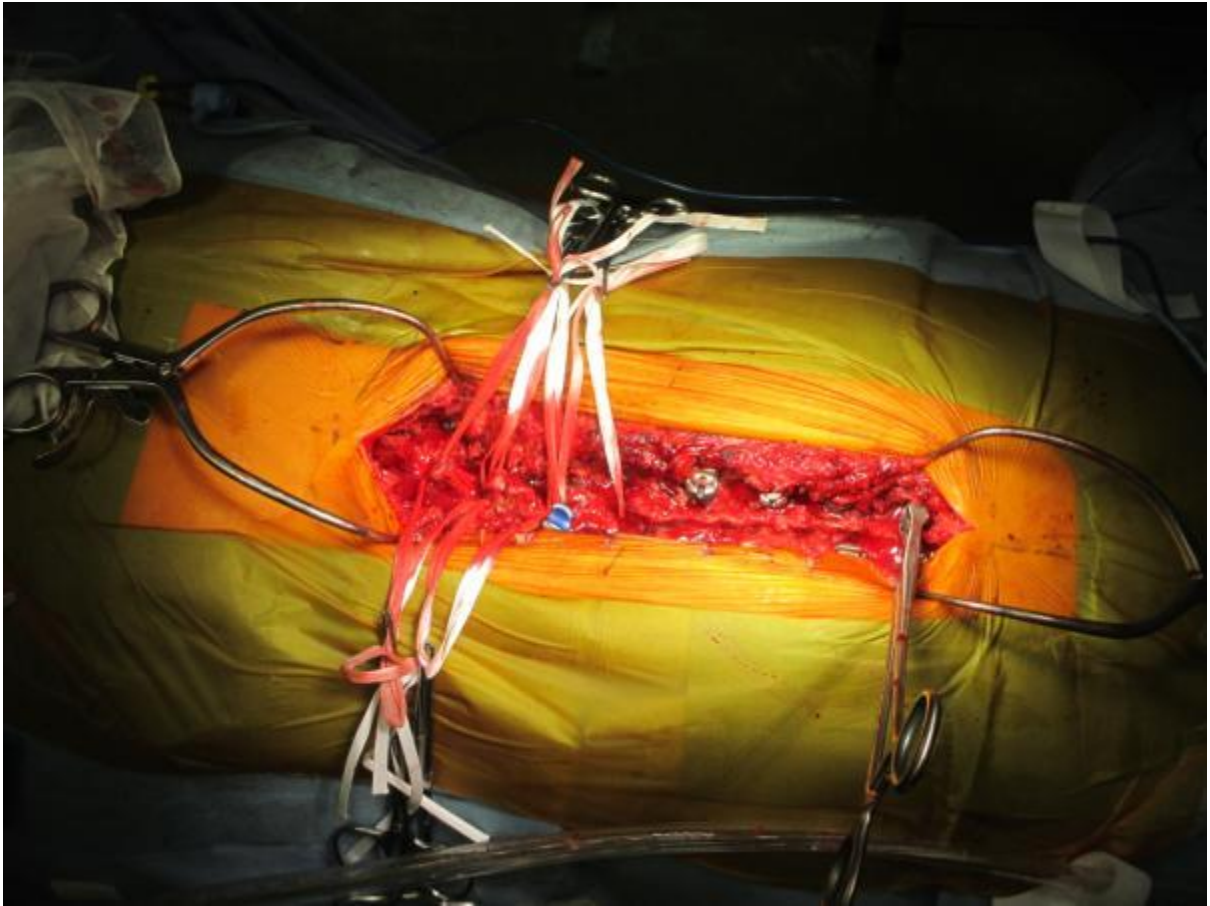






Thursday morning we went to the OR to observe Prof Shimizu perform a posterior instrumentation in a patient of adult deformity. It was a pleasure to see him operate as he is a very meticulous surgeon and he was kind enough to answer all our queries. In the evening we were treated to an authentic Japanese course meal courtesy Dr Ryoji Kamasaki , our Japanese co-fellow at a local Japanese restaurant.







Friday was the last official day for us and we spent the morning observing Prof Shimizu in his outpatient department. In the evening we were taken by him to see the Mayor of Gifu city and we were honoured to meet him. For the final dinner we were invited by Prof Shimizu where he and his wife were the perfect hosts. All of us greatly enjoyed the home cooked food served with love by Prof Shimizu and his wife and then it was time to bid farewell.



These 3 weeks have been great in terms of the experience gained and fostering a feeling of friendship and camaraderie between all 4 of us and gave us moments to cherish lifelong.

I once again thank the APSS and the APOA for giving me the opportunity.