

VISITING PROFESSOR PROGRAM - SOUTH KOREA



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I landed in Seoul, South Korea on Friday night, November 9, and started my first visit there as an ISAPS Visiting Professor. After about a one and a half-hour car ride, I arrived at the Intercontinental Hotel located in the Financial District in Downtown Seoul. My first impression was that it is a huge city with many high rise and modern buildings. It is also quite safe and peaceful and there are many things you can enjoy.

Dr. J. P. Hong, a renowned plastic surgeon in the Department of Plastic Surgery, Asan Medical Center, University of Ulsan, in Seoul hosted my visit. On my first day, he organized a guided tour for me to visit the entire hospital. Asan Medical Center is the largest hospital in South Korea. (Figure 1) It was founded by the founder of Hyundai Motor Company, Mr. Ju-Yung Chung who wanted it to be called Asan. The hospital has about 2,500 beds with very modern buildings and first-class facilities. It's very impressive to see that as a relatively new hospital, it has a state-of-the art



Figure 1 - A view of Asan Medical Center in Seoul, South Korea.



Figure 2 - The author in one of the entrances in the medical center.

administrative system that ensures the hospital runs smoothly and provides the best possible medical or surgical care for their national and international patients. (Figure 2) For example, the hospital is well known for its liver transplant program both nationally and internationally. It appears to me that the hospital really has whatever one needs to conduct either routine or tertiary patient care.

The Department of Plastic Surgery has ten full time faculty surgeons. It is the largest Department of Plastic Surgery in South Korea primarily divided into 3 major sub-specialties: head and neck reconstruction and craniofacial surgery; breast reconstruction; and extremity reconstruction. They also run a plastic surgery residency program. All the plastic surgery residents are quite energetic and eager to learn. I was surprised that English is quite common and that the proficiency level of English among the residents and faculty is quite good. There is an incredible vision for international scientific exchange within Asan Medical Center. During my visit I met their new chairman of the department,



Figure 3 - The social event at night for a typical "Korean dinner" with Dr. H. P. Hong, other faculty members, residents, and international fellows.

Dr. J. W. Choi, a renowned craniofacial and head and neck reconstructive surgeon. He has served as the program chair of the scientific committee of the Korean Society of Plastic Reconstructive Surgeons' annual meeting which has become very international with English as the only instructional language. During my visit to Asan Medical Center, I also met many international fellows from the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Argentina.

These fellows will spend variable amounts of time in the medical center and receive state of the art plastic surgery training under the supervision of Korean plastic surgery faculty. My local host also organized a fantastic social event for me, and for other international visiting fellows, and we all enjoyed Korean Barbeque very much. (Figure 3)

During my second day, I delivered a lecture on "What Do You Know Now About Fat Grafting?" My lecture included a discussion on common techniques in fat grafting, current concepts of fat graft survival, the role of adipose-derived stem cells in fat grafting, and regenerative plastic surgery with fat grafting. My expertise in cryopreservation of fat grafts was also discussed at length. (Figure 4)



Figure 4 - A group photo with faculty members, residents, and international fellows after my lecture.



Figure 5 - Dr. J. W. Choi, the new chairman of the department, presented me with a gift from their department after my lecture.

My lecture was very well received by the residents, fellows, and their faculty members. Both Dr. Choi and Dr. Hong praised me highly for the quality and scientific content of my lecture. (Figure 5) They really appreciated the opportunity to host their first ever ISAPS Visiting Professor and invited me back to give more lectures on aesthetic plastic surgery.



Figure 6 - With Dr. J. P. Hong, my local host, in the operating room.

During my visit I also went to the operating room to see how various plastic surgical procedures were performed at Asan Medical Center. (Figure 6) They have incredible skills in lower extremity reconstructive microsurgery, breast reconstruction, and head and neck and craniofacial reconstruction. Therefore, almost all international fellows believe their time spent at the Asan Medical Center in a fellowship training or as a short-term visitor is worthwhile.

South Korea is also well known as the capitol of cosmetic surgery in Asia. I had the opportunity to visit an ISAPS faculty member, Dr. Man Koon Suh, at the J. W. Plastic Surgery Clinic in Seoul. Dr. Suh is one of the owners. (Figure 7) This clinic runs very well and even offers English, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese to their international patients. Dr. Suh's practice is exclusively in Asian rhinoplasty. He recently published a new book entitled, "Atlas



Figure 7 - With Dr. Man Koon Suh at the J. W. Plastic Surgery Clinic in Seoul.

of Asian Rhinoplasty.” He obviously is an accomplished rhinoplasty surgeon with mature skills.

On my last day on the way to the Incheon international airport, I had the opportunity to visit Incheon Landing Operation Museum located in Incheon, South Korea. (Figure 8) As many of you know the history of the Korean war, “Incheon Landing Operation” had dramatically changed the fate of the Korean war and is a piece of history you should know about.



Figure 8 - The outside of the Incheon Landing Operation Museum.

It is my great honor to serve as an ISAPS ambassador to visit Asan Medical Center in South Korea. The extent of scientific exchange in plastic surgery was intense and I have also learned a lot from our South Korea colleagues in terms of their vision, drive, and surgical skills. They also try to be the best in plastic surgery. I’m so happy to share my expertise in aesthetic surgery with our Korean plastic surgery residents, the faculty members, and even the international trainees. Our Visiting Professor program will have an impact on the next generation of plastic surgeons in that country and I’m so thrilled to help accomplish the mission of ISAPS in worldwide aesthetic surgery education.