

FELLOWSHIP REPORT: DR G.H. IBRAHEEM, PAEDIATRIC ORTHOPAEDIC UNIT JULY – DEC 2017

Background:

During my residency training, most orthopaedic surgeons in Nigeria practiced as general orthopaedic surgeons. Subspecialties in orthopaedics are only recently developing in Nigeria more so in my centre. I've always been interested in working with children and I picked up an interest in paediatric orthopaedics specifically after spending a few months of my residency training working with a paediatric orthopaedic surgeon in Cairo. My interest was further cemented after working in Nigeria under Dr W. Yinusa, who was a paediatric orthopaedic fellow at the Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital, Hong Kong several years ago. It was from him I developed an interest in attending the fellowship here in Hong Kong. I applied several times and was overjoyed when I was finally accepted in December 2016. After the long process of documentation, medical licensing and visa processing, I finally arrived Hong Kong on the 1st of July 2017 and got to DKCH on the 2nd of July.

Fellowship:

I resumed officially at 8:30am on the 3rd of July, 2017. Coincidentally, the first person I met in the lift going up was Dr W. Chow who I later learnt was to be my supervisor for the fellowship. For the period of the fellowship, I participated fully in the clinical and academic programs of the department in general and the paediatric orthopaedic unit in particular. Paediatric orthopaedics is a specialty where results of intervention are not immediately apparent because our patients are still growing and changing. It thus takes a lot of training, personal experience and research to know what management strategies to implement and when to implement them. We have a saying back home: "A good surgeon knows *how* to 'cut' but a great surgeon knows *when* to 'cut' ". I got to appreciate the thought processes that go into deciding what operative or non-operative interventions are necessary for the long-term benefit of the patient.

A large proportion of the patients managed by the paediatric orthopaedic unit at DKCH have complications of cerebral palsy especially hip subluxations and joint contractures. As early childhood care improves in Nigeria, we are beginning to see more patients with neurological conditions surviving into late childhood and early adulthood and thus needing orthopaedic care for the complications they develop. My training in DKCH is thus timely and I hope to be able to put the principles I have understood here into practice at home. I participated in a variety of surgical procedures as an assistant or as the lead surgeon under supervision. Of note was a patient with congenital pseudoarthrosis of the tibia for which we performed an excision, bone and periosteal graft and Ilizarov fixation for.

Academics: The Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital and the Queen Mary Hospital place a high value on academics. I attended the weekly academic conferences of the department where a wide variety of topics in various subspecialties of orthopaedics were discussed. It gave me an opportunity to keep up with other subspecialties. I was also able to present along with other members of the unit at one of those seminars. We presented a conference on 'Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis'. I also attended several Saturday seminars organized by the Hong Kong Orthopaedic Association which held in different hospitals in Hong Kong. Within the unit, I am currently involved in reviewing the long-term results of treatment for two main categories of cerebral palsy patients with hip instability managed in the department in the last several years. Hopefully, we will be able to publish these after my fellowship is completed.

During my stay here, I was also involved in teaching medical students in the clinics and participated twice as a judge at the S.P. Chow group presentations for medical students. I must say that the quality of presentations from the students was impressive.

Conclusion:

I am grateful to the Department of Orthopaedics, University of Hong Kong for the opportunity I've had to come for this fellowship. I am particularly grateful to Dr W. Chow and Dr E. Kuong whose contrasting but complimentary teaching methods at the bedside, clinic and in the operating room have been invaluable. I also appreciate Prof Luk who took time to explain the principles of non-operative care for scoliosis patients as practiced here in DKCH. Other consultants, fellows and residents in the department particularly in the paediatric orthopaedic unit were also friendly and very helpful in providing tips to make my stay as rewarding as possible. The nurses, nursing students and clinic volunteers were very helpful in ensuring I was able to communicate with patients on the ward and in clinics. The administrative staff of the department and the hospital, particularly Ms May and Ms Wong were very helpful and ensured I was as comfortable as possible.

I have had a very fruitful experience here at DKCH and I am sure this will impact positively on my career going forward.



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