

My HPB Surgery and Liver Transplantation Fellowship in Kaohsiung Chang Gung Memorial Hospital

My time here as a fellow in HPB surgery and liver transplant is coming to an end. In this last week of my stay here in this great institution I have nothing but gratitude and admiration to Prof. Chao-Long Chen and his team of excellent physicians, nurses and non-medical staffs.

Though being a liver transplant surgeon was a dream since when I was in medical school, when I finally got accepted here as a fellow, I am still not sure if I have made the right decision. Because for 2 “long” years I will leave my family and stop my already established general surgery practice back home. Yet still, I hold onto faith, hope, love and courage to “go out of my box” and push myself here and start my journey. Now, as 2 “short” years has gone by, I am glad and now definitely sure that I have made the right decision!

It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to be able to train here under the tutelage of one of the most brilliant man I have known – Prof. Chao-Long Chen. Training under him and his team, who is also among the best in the world, made this past 2 years of my life one of the best experiences I have. I have really learned a lot, have acquired new sets of skills and have gain new mentors and friends.

It will definitely take some time and much space if I will mention all the things I have learned here. As a summary of all these things, aside from the technical aspects I would like to emphasize, what I think, is equally or probably the more important ones. Education, experience, innovation and attitude. These are the things and values I perceived to be the greatest assets of this institution, the main factors that propelled it to be one of the global leaders in liver transplantation, and, as a fellow who is about to end his training, the learnings I have gained from my mentors here.

As surgeons, we have committed ourselves to a lifelong education. Without it, time will eventually make us incompetent. Surgeons in this institution are the leaders in their own field. They approached each case equipped with the right and current knowledge that will provide the best care for their patient. Aside from gaining new knowledge, experience is also a valuable teacher. Patients should be treated completely and each patient should be considered a valuable and unique learning experience. Be it a good outcome or not, each experience will increase our wisdom in preparation for the next patients that will come our way seeking for our help. With this institution’s sheer number of liver patients, being treated by the same team, and being led by one remarkable surgeon, no wonder they have one of the best outcomes. New research studies and eventually new innovations that will further increase our understanding of the diseases we are dealing with and improve our diagnostic and treatment strategies are likewise very important tools in delivering better outcomes to our patients. As an emphasis, research

and development in this institution is what I found most appealing and probably one of the leading forces that drives it to where it is now. The environment here is most conducive for learning and research. Lastly, and definitely not the least, is attitude. Attitude to strive for excellence at all times. Attitude to accept defeat in times of troubles and the attitude to stand again and continue striving for excellence. Without the proper attitude, we may lose the inspiration to keep us going or worse, lead us to another path far away from what we originally stand for as surgeons – to treat our patients and do no harm.

Having to reflect on these things, it is probably the experience and innovation part are what we lack back home. We have probably learned the same basic things in reading almost the same medical and surgical textbooks. With proper molding when we were younger (and also for our younger colleagues), we may have the right attitude to face the challenges that comes our way. But, the atmosphere of research and innovation and the vast experience this institution has are way beyond what we have back home right now.

As I begin this new chapter of my life as a surgeon, all the skills, wisdom and experiences that I have gained here will definitely make a great impact into establishing our own liver center. Armed with all of these, though it will still be major challenge back home, we will be able to manage and take care our liver patients better. Hopefully, and with the support of everyone in our hospital back home, we may be able to establish our own liver transplantation center. We may not surpass the still growing achievements of KCGMH, at least we may start our own center right, perform every case diligently and in the best possible way, and allow ourselves to continue to innovate and improve.

Thank you very very much! I am and will be eternally grateful!

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