

2023 POSNA/EPOS Traveling Fellowship Program

April 15 – 29, 2023

Drs. Flavia Alberghina, Şenol Bekmez and Ozren Kubat

Minneapolis

Our adventure started at the Twin cities as we all flew in on Saturday, April 15th. Senol and Ozren arrived first and met with Dr Kyle Miller at the airport. It wasn't hard to pick him out of the crowd because he was wearing (as promised) his USA flag polo shirt. Flavia arrived a bit later in the evening and apparently had no issues with recognizing him too, again probably due to his attire. Dr. Miller and his lovely girlfriend Mary invited us in their home where we stayed during the first leg of our trip and made us feel as if we were lifelong friends from the get-go! On the first night we all got to know each other and shared a lovely dinner with Dr. Steven Koop and his wife Debbie, Dr. Tom Novacheck and Dr. Jennifer Laine together with her son Phillip, a great table tennis player, and daughter Maggie, a beaming sweetheart.



Dinner at Kyle's

The morning of Sunday, April 16th started out with gloomy weather and – snow! Despite the hiccup with the weather, we went out for an invigorating nature walk to Minnehaha falls with our hosts. Later that day we were welcomed by Dr Laine to her home for drinks and conversation before going out to dinner (what about those portions!?) and seeing the Broadway show “Hamilton” at the Orpheum theater in downtown Minneapolis. The show was an incredible display of talent, the theater old and distinguished (with somewhat small seats felt by one of us more than the others).



Fun at the Minnehaha falls! All smiles and one pacifier



American style BBQ with our hosts – how ‘bout those portions!

Come Monday, we were all very well fed, a bit jet-lagged and keen to see what our gracious hosts had in store for us. The day started early with a very interesting tour of the gait lab at Gillette's, followed by a tour of their on-site orthotics and prosthetics workshop and therapy facilities.



Dr. Kyle Miller and EPOS Fellows, Gillette Children's Hospital tour

After the early morning part, we were escorted by our "best friend in Minnesota", Dr. Miller to the operating rooms where we had the opportunity to observe great work done by Gillette's staff – Flavia with Dr. Truong, Senol with Dr. Laine, and Ozren with Dr. Guillaume. The OR visits gave rise to a fruitful discussion on the cases at hand, with the staff more than happy to share their experience and answer all our questions.



The “Green gang” entering the operating rooms

In the afternoon we all sat down for lunch catered by the Department and later made our way to the sim lab with Dr. Sundberg who demonstrated a Gillette special for us – a prone VDRO of the proximal femur on a model. Great fun!



Dr. Sundberg and Dr. Truong demonstrating techniques in the Sim lab

We were then taken to a very famous brewing house and shared a dinner with a lot of friendly and very kind Gillette's staff who turned out en masse to greet us and make us feel welcome in their Institution, city, and country. Again, a heartwarming experience. This concluded our very eventful first day and we all retreated to Kyle's house, shared a few beers, and lit up the fire pit by the lake and enjoyed great conversation.

Tuesday was the big day for us as we would all give our talks later in the afternoon. But first, we were treated to a Dr. Novacheck special in the OR – a prone VDRO with pelvic osteotomy! We thoroughly enjoyed this and Senol, the “hip guy” of the bunch, made it a point to try it out at least once in his practice. After the OR we had lunch to gather up strength and went to observe Dr. Dahl's clinic. This was eye-opening and useful in many ways, and we even got a sneak peek into his plans for a debate he was about to have at the POSNA meeting. After this clinical experience we got ready for our talks. All the topics we spoke about raised rich discussion and were well accepted by the audience comprised of Gillette pediatric orthopaedic staff. The nice weather that day allowed us to have some fun in the great outdoors when we returned “home”, minutes away from our accommodation!



Senol and Ozren enjoying the one day of nice weather in Minneapolis

Wednesday morning started early, with our hosts having us shadow Dr. Novacheck in the gait lab as he helped us grasp the intricacies of gait analysis.

And that was it for Minnesota! Dr Miller took us to see the Mall of America, a local staple and tourist attraction for people from all over and later that afternoon our chariots awaited, as we were moving on to the second leg of our trip – Philadelphia. To say we were treated like old friends by everyone at Gillette would be an understatement, as they all warmed up the somewhat wintery Minnesota spring with their kindness and hospitality.



The local bodega in Minneapolis

Philadelphia

Following the cold but lovely 3 days at Minneapolis, we headed to Philadelphia after a 2-hour flight on Wednesday, April 19th. One of the CHOP fellows, Dr Soroush Baghdadi (pronounced “Big Daddy” as we later found out from his fellow doctors) very kindly picked us up at the airport and gave us a ride to the hotel. On Thursday, April 20th, we woke up early and gathered in the lobby. Another CHOP fellow, Dr Rachel Lenhart met us at the hotel, and took us on a short walk to CHOP through the historical University of Pennsylvania campus. It seemed spring had already arrived in Philadelphia.



EPOS fellows at CHOP

We met with the faculty led by Dr Flynn who gave us a welcoming as warm as the Philadelphia spring. Our first activity at CHOP was to attend the case conference presented by CHOP fellows. Then, we had a short walk in the orthopaedic division with Dr Flynn as he informed us about the past, present, and future of the first children's hospital in the United States. Next, we split into groups, as Senol attended Dr Sankar's surgery case, and Flavia and Ozren joined Dr Flynn in clinic.

We met up at again at noon to have lunch with the CHOP fellows. It was very nice to share our ideas on life and pediatric orthopaedics. After lunch, we had a great University of Pennsylvania campus tour courtesy of the amazing Bridget who is a CHOP Fellow and former U Penn student.



Ozren, Flavia and Senol at the University of Philadelphia campus (1)



Ozren, Flavia and Senol at the University of Philadelphia campus (2)

Thursday afternoon, we made our presentations to CHOP faculty and fellows about our interesting cases and ongoing research projects which provoked fruitful discussions. Our long but very efficient day ended with a beautiful dinner at Talula's Garden Restaurant.



We became besties with Dr Flynn



Dinner with CHOP crew

Friday, April 21st at CHOP also started with the early morning case conference. After this we headed to the ORs to observe surgical cases. At noon, we headed back to the hotel and Dr Apurva Shah picked us up with his car and took us for a lovely guided tour of the Barnes Museum which contains one of the world's greatest collections of impressionists, post-impressionists and modern art. We were all mesmerized by the priceless pieces of artwork.



Is art for people or for art's sake?



We are in a Philly mood!

Our Friday night activity was to watch a Phillies baseball game with CHOP crew. Hot dog in one hand, a big glass of beer in another, still clueless on the rules of the game at the end but had a blast! That was such an American experience!



EPOS fellows at the Philadelphia Phillies game!

Nashville

After our arrival at the airport on Saturday, April 22nd our adventure in Nashville started with an authentic Tennessee experience. Drs Nathaniel Lempert and David Ebenezer, together with Vanderbilt's fellows and residents, guided us through a whiskey and bourbon tasting at a local distillery.



Fellows at Nashville Barrel Company Distillery

After the tasting experience we had the opportunity to feast on a traditional Southern meal including pan-fried chicken, catfish, buttermilk biscuits, cornbread, macaroni and cheese, and many other delicious dishes.



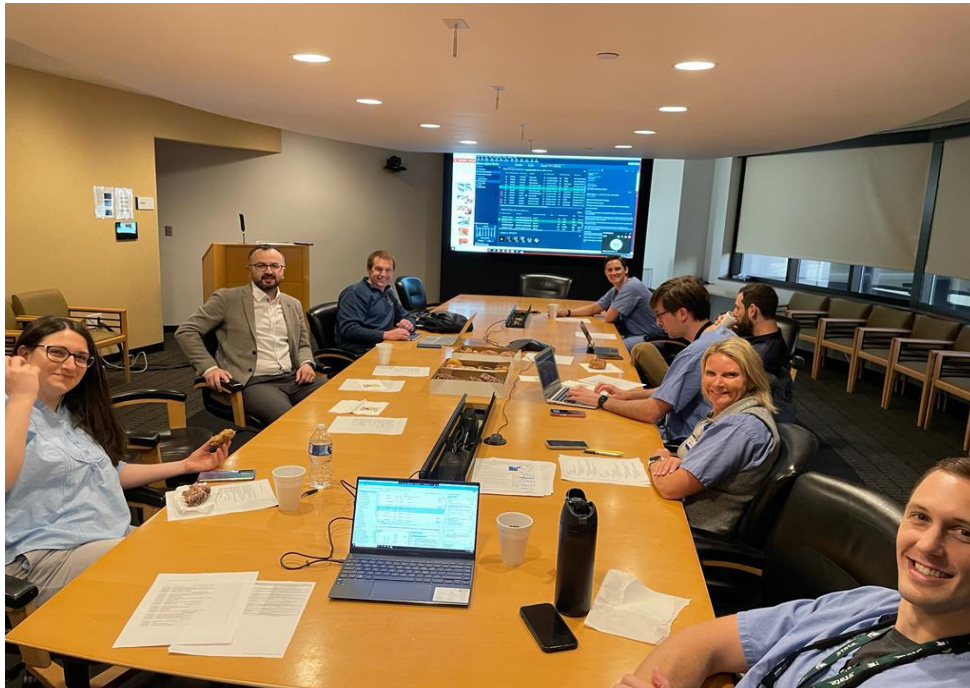
At a local Southern restaurant with the Vanderbilt crew

On Sunday, April 23rd, we had the great pleasure to spend some time with Dr. Jonathan Schoenecker and Dr. Gregory Mencia. Also, we had another chance to appreciate the American-made distilled spirits at the historical Nelson's Green Brier Distillery tasting, again, a precious selection of different Tennessee whiskeys and bourbons. We continued our Southern culinary experience in a traditional BBQ restaurant in which Dr. Schoenecker enthusiastically enlightened us on the biology of Perthes disease and other topics of his interesting basic science research.



At a local BBQ restaurant with Dr. Gregory Mencio (left) and Dr. Jonathan Schoenecker (right)

Monday, April 24th was our first day at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. The day started with a pre-op/post-op conference with Vanderbilt's attendings and trainees. We could shadow then Dr. Gregory Mencio (Flavia and Şenol) and Dr. Craig Louer (Ozren) in their respective operating theatres.



Morning orthopaedic conference in Vanderbilt

After a quick lunch, our activity continued at the institutional cadaver lab. Dr. Schoenecker, helped by his fellow Dr. Courtney Baker, guided us into the practical study of the peri-acetabular osteotomy and the surgical dislocation of the hip. With incredible energy and passion, Dr. Schoenecker showed us the surgical approach, the deep anatomy and the most useful tricks of both procedures.



Dr. Kubat and Dr. Bekmez on the way to the cadaver lab

After almost three hours of interesting and enthusiastic discussion at the cadaver lab, the last part of the day included a delicious Mexican dinner in the conference room while presenting and discussing our cases and research projects with all Drs. Schoenecker, Mencia, Martus, Louer, Lempert and Baker. Once back at the hotel, tired but very happy, we went for a short walk around Vanderbilt. Still no time for the famous Honky Tonks of Nashville downtown, the following day would have been another early wake-up.



Enjoying a leisurely walk in the Centennial park

Tuesday, April 25th started with the spine conference led by Drs. Mencio, Martus and Louer in which a wide selection of cases including neuromuscular scoliosis, EOS and spondylolisthesis were discussed. We went then to Dr. Schoenecker's operating room where he performed a derotational femoral osteotomy and hip open reduction in a 6-month-old girl with severe DDH. Again, with his energy and enthusiasm, we went through indications of the procedure, clinical examination, importance of the assessment of femoral rotational deformity, surgical steps of the procedure and post-operative plan. Overall, it was an outstanding opportunity to discuss the details of DDH diagnosis and treatment.

At this point, our adventure at Vanderbilt was close to the end. We can summarize our experience at this incredible institution with a short sentence repeated many times by Dr. Schoenecker while he was talking about pediatric orthopaedics, periosteum and biology: "SO AWESOME!"



At Vanderbilt Children's Hospital with Dr. Jonathan Schoenecker

From Wednesday, April 26th, to Friday, April 28th, we attended POSNA. It was such a pleasure to meet many of the attendings and fellows from Gillette, CHOP and Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, but also the EPOS president, Prof. Hakan Omeroglu, the Past Presidents Prof. Ignacio Sanpera and Prof. Bjarne Møller-Madsen, and other European colleagues.



Prof. Sanpera, Dr. Bekmez, Dr. Alberghina, Dr. Kubat, Prof. Omeroglu, Prof. Møller-Madsen

As expected, the scientific program of POSNA was rich and several outstanding works were presented. Each day, once the conference activities were concluded, we had the opportunity to explore and enjoy Nashville downtown, attend the conference night event at the Musicians Hall of Fame & Museum and the worldly famous Nashville Honky Tonks. Also, we had the honor to be invited to the CHOP alumni night event and meet the great people who made us feel so welcome at their Institution just a few days ago. Great party Dr Flynn!



CHOP Alumni night event

At the conclusion of POSNA, our Travelling Fellowship arrived to its' end. It was an incredible experience made of human and professional connections, learning lessons, opinion exchanges, deep discussion, and most of all new friends among the amazing EPOS-POSNA community.

All three of us would like to thank EPOS and POSNA for this life changing opportunity, as well as each and every one of the people we met during our trip, who made our stay in the amazing U.S. of A. such a memorable experience. We hope to return the favor!