SIU Scholar: Dr. Johar Raza Syed

The Société Internationale d’Urologie (SIU) offers Training Scholarships for young doctors with basic surgical or urological qualifications. The SIU Scholarships involve training in a recognized urological center of excellence located in the candidate’s geographic region. These SIU-accredited centers provide an excellent environment for learning and, in many instances, hands-on experience, so that candidates may acquire knowledge and skills that they will be able to transfer to their own setting of practice. In this series of short communications, SIU Scholars write about the impact that these training opportunities facilitated by the SIU had on their quality of care and career development. Information about applying for an SIU Scholarship is available at http://www.siurology.org.

I began my SIU fellowship at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI) on March 6, 2012. I was really excited, and at the same time anxious, about joining this prestigious institution. Part of my apprehension was also about meeting and interacting with new people with a different cultural and social background. But contrary to my concerns, I found RPCI very accommodating. The entire department and the operating room staff were very welcoming and helped me settle in quickly to allow me to attain my goals.

My objectives for the fellowship were clearly identified by my supervisor, Dr. Guru, with my input. These goals included not only attaining proficiency at robot-assisted surgical skills but also at development of research skills, along with clinical urologic knowledge. I immediately started to work on various manuscripts and to actively participate in the ongoing prospective studies, related to the robotic surgical simulator (RoSS), in the department.

During the training period, I met all of my training objectives. I completed the RoSS curriculum on the robotic simulator multiple times. This exposure helped me acquire basic robotic surgical skills. After the simulator experience, I was able to successfully complete the daVinci robot skills tasks in the dry laboratory settings. The combination of the two tasks helped me attain the robotic skills and expertise to the degree that I was able to help and supervise other trainees attending the simulation and dry laboratory sessions. I was able to spend more than 150 cumulative hours on the simulator during the 3 months of the fellowship. The animal laboratory exposure helped develop the feeling of robot-assisted surgery on living tissue. I attended approximately 9 animal laboratory sessions amounting to a total of 90 hours of porcine robot-assisted surgery. Intermittently, I also attended operating room sessions and observed some complex robot-assisted urologic cases.

The research goals of the training time were also achieved. I was able to author approximately 7 publications planned for peer reviewed journal submission. These included topics on clinical research as well as on robotic simulation training. I must say that this exposure has developed a new interest for me, ie, to pursue further knowledge in the field of simulated training.

This fellowship was a very fruitful, memorable, and unique experience for me, not only in terms of robot-assisted surgery and development of research skills but also in establishing long-term friendship with the people at this institution. I look forward to establishing and organizing a robot-assisted surgery program in Pakistan and to further developing the field of simulated training in urology. I sincerely thank RPCI and the SIU for providing me with this rare learning opportunity.

Abbreviated CV. Dr. Johar Raza Syed studied at Baqai Medical University in Karachi, Pakistan, where he received his Bachelor degree in Medicine and Surgery (M.B.B.S.). He completed his basic surgical training in England UK, where he passed the Membership exam to the Royal College (MRCS). He started his Urology
residency training in 2007 at Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan. During his residency, he did elective training in the Division of Urology at Washington University Medical Center, St. Louis, Missouri, in October-November 2010 as well as at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantations in Karachi, Pakistan in August and September 2011. From January 2010 to December 2011, Dr. Syed was the Chief Resident in Urology at Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan.

Dr. Syed was an SIU Scholar the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, and is currently a Fellow in Uro-Oncology in the Department of Surgical Oncology in Shaukat Khanum Cancer Hospital and Research Center in Lahore, Pakistan.

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