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Introduction: EFORT Spring Traveling Fellowship - One of the greatest experience orthopedic surgery resident could have!

As a young doctor and resident of orthopedic surgery I was very excited when I was selected to be a candidate from Macedonia for the EFORT Travelling Fellowship Program. It was a great honour for me to have a chance to contact and communicate with a lot of colleagues and famous professors from all over the Europe and at the same time can learn about new methods, current trends and new techniques in orthopaedic surgery. As I can think about the whole fellowship I cannot mention that it wasn't just for academics purpose but it was also a great opportunity to learn about different cultures, make new friends with whom we exchange a lot of experience and create new personal bonds that are the base of future collaboration.

Detailed description of the fellowship:

I arrived at Dubrovnik Airport, Croatia after a short and pleasant flight from Skopje through Zagreb. It was very nice and sunny day and during our organized transport from the airport to the hotel we had a chance to see the beautiful city of Dubrovnik and its beautiful coast washed by the sunlight. We were settling down in the beautiful Valamar Lacroma Hotel, Dubrovnik, where the SEEFORT Forum was held. We were kindly welcomed by our host Dr. Tomislav Cengic (Secretary of Croatian Orthopedic Society) who in a short way explained every detail that we have to know. After accommodation we had a meeting with all the Fellows and representatives of SEEFORT Organizing Committee and EFORT representatives in which we were had a chance to know each other and represent our countries, our orthopaedic departments and present the work we were doing in our departments. It was a chance to see the difference between educational systems and programs for residents in the different countries through Europe.

After the meeting we had a dinner at Hotel Restoran Valamar Lacroma with the godfather of the Fellowship Prof.Dr. M. Szendroi and Prof.Dr. R.Colundzic - President of Croatian Orthopedic Society and president of the SEEFORT Organizing Committee and EFORT President, Prof.Dr. S.Cannon. It was a nice dinner with perfectly prepared sea food specialties in which we enjoy with specially selected wines from Croatia regions. In the nice restaurant atmosphere we continue our conversation exchanging information's about our work, our countries cultures, traditions and future plans and had a chance to know each other better.

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The next day after the breakfast we started attending lectures at SEEFORT planned program. It was tight schedule, there were a lot of interesting lectures divided in three main subjects as Biotechnology in Orthopaedics, General orthopaedics with musculoskeletal trauma and Spine, held in three Halls so everyone can make a plan and attend lectures that are at the greatest interest of them. Between the sessions we had coffee breaks where we had a chance to discuss about the subject that we heard and exchange our own experience with the related topics.



I must mention that all the time during the lectures and coffee breaks our hosts, members of Croatian organizing committee, were with us and at our service and they try to provide us with all that we need, answer questions, coordinate and make us satisfy and comfortable.

At the end of the first busy day there was an opening ceremony with welcome drink at the spacious Lacroma restaurant terrace where we enjoy in the beautiful panoramic seaside view of Adriatic sea.

On the 24. April we continue our second SEEFORT day with interesting lectures in two Halls, the first dedicated to Hip and Knee arthroplasty and the second one to Paediatric orthopaedics, which I find very interesting. I heard the sessions about the most common problems in paediatric orthopaedics, current role of soft tissue surgery in paediatric orthopaedics and tumors in children. It was interesting to hear about new thesis about DDH especially because of high incidence of this disorder in my country. At the end of the day with all SEEFORT participants we attended a Gala Dinner hosted by CrOS at the marvellous Revelin Restorant situated at Revelin Fortress from 15th century, located at The Old Town of Dubrovnik. That night also was the birthday of one of the colleague fellow Dr. Xavier Le Duy from Switzerland, so we prepare a little surprise and a birthday cake for him. We have a wonderful party with a nice music and a lot of dancing.



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Our third day at SEEFORT was very interesting for us because there was a session dedicated as YOUTH Day where we could hear about tips and tricks for young orthopaedic surgeons. We also heard about FORTE – Federation of Orthopaedic Trainees in Europe and ideas and plans for future harmonisation of Orthopaedic and Traumatology in EU. At the end of the sessions there was a Closing ceremony with speech from the Officials and short presentation of all EFORT travelling fellows.



It was the end of SEEFORT, but our day wasn't over. We had organized sightseeing of the beautiful city of Dubrovnik with an official guide who took us through The Old Town city and through the massive Stone Walls that remained from the 15th century.



We heard about the history, culture, and tradition of the Dubrovnik city through the centuries and had additional time to walk through narrow streets and feel the atmosphere of the Dalmatian city and drink coffee and taste traditional sea food specialties. We finished this wonderful day with a nice dinner at the Valamar Lacroma Hotel Restaurant.

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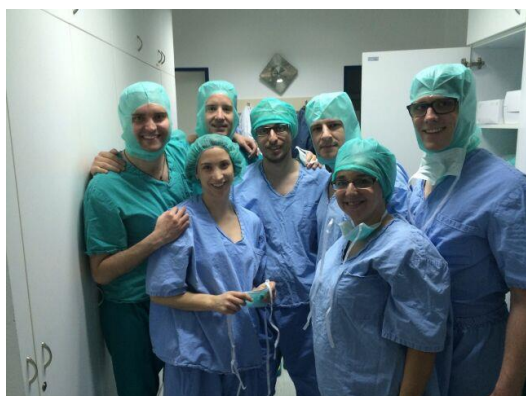
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The next day (26th April) we left the beautiful Valamar Lacroma Hotel and with a domestic flight we landed in Zagreb where with organized private bus transport headed to city of Osijek. We had a pleasant trip with beautiful sightseeing of Pannonian granary fields and at the evening we arrived in the city of Osijek where we accommodate at small traditional hotel in the centre of the Osijek. We continued the night with dinner at traditional Slavonian restaurant where we taste traditional Slavonian food and heard traditional chalgija music. It was refreshing experience, since that culture is very similar to my Macedonian traditional feasts.

In the morning we headed toward University Hospital Centre of Osijek, at the Department of Orthopaedics. We were kindly welcomed by Dr. Zelic and heard lectures about minimal invasive VS standard TKA approach and had a chance to see a live surgery of TKA.



After that operating room experience we continued the trauma section lectures about fractures of proximal femur which was followed by another live surgery of ACL reconstruction. It was encouraging to see that even the hospital was in old facility and it wasn't equipped with the newest appliances the doctors were very experienced and doing their job perfectly and because of that had a very good results and outcomes. After finishing the visit of the Orthopaedic Department we were transferred to beautiful ecological region near the Osijek where we visit traditional ecological farm. There we were witnessing preparation of Slavonian homemade rooster goulash and taste homemade apple juice. With happy faces and full stomachs we headed to the city of Zagreb where we arrived at the evening and settle down at the nice Hotel Croatia at the centre of the city. At 28th of the April we started the day earlier than usual because we had tide schedule. We started the day with visiting the Department of Orthopaedics Surgery at the University Hospital Centre of Zagreb which is the largest hospital in Croatia. It is also a teaching hospital of the University of Zagreb located at the large campus colloquially known as "Rebro" which was established in 1942. We had very interesting lectures about treatment of developmental disorders of lower extremities with special accent of DDH and hip arthroplasty and revisions. After that we visited the Department of Traumatology at the University Hospital Centre "Sestre Milosrdnice" Zagreb, where we continued our academic discussions about management of a pelvis and acetabular fracture and spine surgery. The lectures were very interactivational with a lot of discussions for interesting case reports which it was very educational. We finished the night with nice dinner in a wine-bar in the centre of the city.

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Next day it was a day for visiting private hospital facilities. These hospitals are built with private funds a couple of years ago and all of them are located in the beautiful natural surroundings away from city centre and noise. First we visit Special hospital for orthopaedic surgery- Akromion, which is the largest privately owned orthopaedic hospital in Croatia. It is located in the Krapinske Toplice, 30 minutes drive from Zagreb. We were warmly welcomed by the director Prof. M.Haspl M.D, PhD, who took us on a little tour through the hospital and after that we had interesting lectures about knee arthroplasty, meniscal repair and shoulder arthroplasty. It was interesting to notice that the hospital was fully equipped with up-to-date technology and we had an opportunity not only to visit live surgery of ACL reconstruction but also to watch surgery in real time in the conference room through ENDO-ALPHA Integrated system and in the same time interact with the leading surgeon in the operating theatre.



After that exiting experience we had relaxational lunch at the traditional country side restaurant. Relaxed and refresh we continue to the special St. Catherine Specialty Hospital. It was a new modern hospital situated in a large facility with over 2254 m² area in a pleasant natural green environment. It has six departments all equipped with the newest technology and working according to the newest up-to-date protocols. We heard lectures about meniscal transplantation, biosurgery in articular cartilage repair and very interesting lecture of Minimal invasive procedures in treatment of back pain which was very useful to us. After the small cocktail where we exchange ideas and contacts we continued our trip to Zagreb and we finished the day at the centre of the city at the traditional restaurant where we had dinner.



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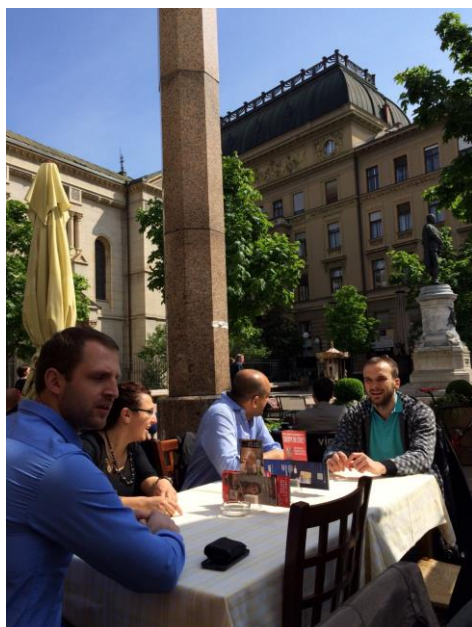
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April 30th, our last day at EFORT Spring Travelling Fellowship, started with the visit of Children's University Hospital - Zagreb. It was nice hospital located in the centre of the city, with maximum used of space and very well organized. We met with Dr. D. Bojic who presented us with most common problems they faced in the children orthopaedic pathology and presented us with revolutionary work they did with the 3D titanium laser custom made implant for personalized pelvic reconstruction after hemipelvectomy in children. They also brought the first patient and so we can see the marvellous result they achieved with that type of procedure. We finish our lecture day with a coffee in the centre of the city and lunch at the medical campus "Rebro" which was a symbolic finish to our wonderful 9-days of beautiful friendship.



Conclusion:

Looking over the days spend as a part of EFORT Travelling Fellowship Program it overwhelms me with beautiful memories. The experiences that I gain change me in very different ways; make me a doctor with new knowledge's, make me enriched with new information's and new points of view and the most important of all, made me person richer with new friends and colleagues. The bonds that we created are the base of future collaboration and base for the future development of Orthopaedics in the Europe.

I am sincerely thankful to MADOT, who nominated me, Croatian Orthopaedic Society, who perfectly organized this event and all the EFORT Officials who made this fellowship possible.

Sincerely,
Dr. Marija Jakimova
Orthopaedic Surgery Resident from Republic of Macedonia