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Introduction:

I was very delighted and honoured that I had been selected for the spring travelling fellowship in Austria. Sharing ideas with colleagues from different countries has always had my interest. Therefore I consider travelling with fellows from 14 different countries as a fantastic opportunity, and a must for all orthopaedic trainees in their last year of training.

Monday and Tuesday: Vienna

It all started on a cool and rainy Sunday night in Vienna. We gathered for a trip to the Adolf Lorenz museum to learn from a comprehensive display of orthopaedic tools of a long forgotten time.

The next morning we got up early. It was only a short walk to the Vienna General Hospital where prof. Windhager and his colleagues gave us a warm welcome. The hospital is one of the largest in Europe and comprises a vast amount of buildings right next to the city centre. During the lectures, special emphasis was put on orthopaedic tumour surgery. In the late afternoon we were able to experience the day-to-day work in the operating theatre. I observed a near-total humeral replacement for a malignant bone tumour. After this long but interesting day we had dinner in the famous Sweitzerhaus, which is located in the Prater. Nobody could finish the one-kilogram pork steak but it sure was worth the try.





On Tuesday we travelled to the outskirts of Vienna to visit Speising Orthopaedic Hospital. It is a nicely situated hospital where we had the opportunity to see several sessions of live surgery, comprising total shoulder and total knee replacement. We travelled by bus through the Alps afterwards to the city of Graz. Luckily the weather had changed and the clear blue sky made the landscape look even more beautiful. That evening we met with our new hosts in a cosy restaurant where we enjoyed dinner.



Wednesday: Graz

I again learned a great deal about orthopaedic tumour surgery in Graz and also about more basic topics like arthroplasty. During several sessions of live surgery we could appreciate hip and knee arthroplasties. Prof. Leithner shared several oncology cases with us in a very interactive session, which I very much appreciated. That evening we undertook a guided city tour in the historic centre of Graz. The view over the city from the 'Schlossberg' (castle hill) was absolutely stunning. The dinner we enjoyed at the Argentinean that evening was truly one of the best we had.

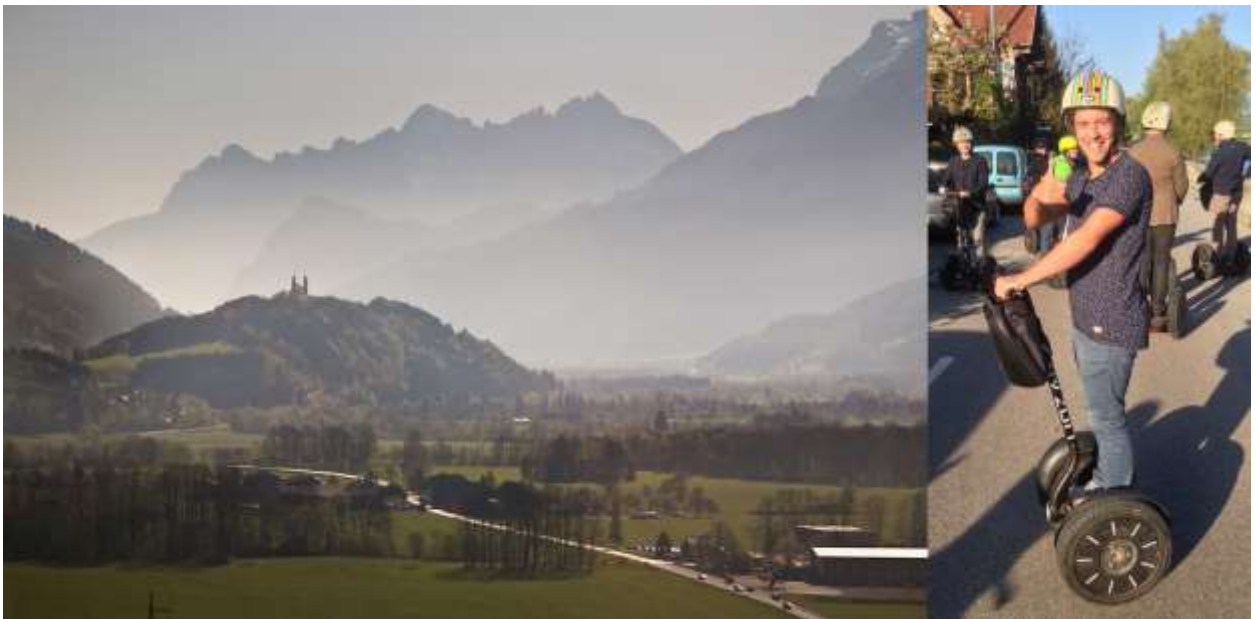
Thursday: Linz

The weather was still amazing when we travelled through the beautiful snow capped Alps that Thursday to the city of Linz. At the Kepler University Hospital Prof. Böhler and his team kindly welcomed us. After a tour through the outpatient clinic we learned about the history of the EFORT and about blood management during some very interesting presentations. By then the best had yet to come. After a day in the hospital we were invited to take part in a Segway tour. This was an absolute highlight as we got to know each other even better and see the nice city in an active manner. Dinner at the restaurant on top of the ruins of the old castle overlooking the city was also a very pleasant surprise. After dinner we had a great time sampling real Austrian craft beers in a local pub until late that night.



Friday: Linz, Krems an der Donau and back to Vienna

The last day of the fellowship started in Linz with several lectures. We were then divided into three groups to observe an ankle, a uni-knee and a hip arthroplasty in the operating theatre. I attended the uni-knee, which was a very meaningful learning experience and I really appreciated the good atmosphere in the team of surgeons. After lunch we headed towards the west to visit the Danube University in Krems. The city of Krems is a small town on a beautiful location, flanked by wineries and situated in a hilly landscape. The university has a large research department with a focus on regenerative medicine, which is led by one of our hosts, Prof Nehrer. We learned about the possibilities and limitations of cartilage repair. We returned to Vienna late that afternoon and had dinner in a local restaurant where I, unfortunately, enjoyed the last of many Schnitzels that week. As this was our last night we had to celebrate this great week in a pub in the city, where our amazing week had come to an end.



Conclusion:

Although it was an exhausting week due to the ambitious programme and the short nights, the fellowship also gives insight in the way orthopaedic care is delivered in other countries and creates new friendship that goes beyond borders. My thanks go therefore to the organizing committee; the Austrian Orthopaedic Society, all hospital venues and last but not least the great group of spring travelling fellows.