Fellow : Dr Chihab-Eddine TALEB

Original Institution : Hand surgery unit Strasbourg France

IBRA institution : Sao Paulo Hand Center – Benef. Portuguesa SP Brazil

Fellowship director : Dr Gustavo Mantovani Ruggiero

Institution chairman : Prof Dr Waldo Lino junior

Period of fellowship : 11/4/2011 to 01/29/2012

I have known Dr Gustavo Mantovani for three years and have always had the desire to go and visit him in Sao Paulo. Indeed, South America is a part of the world we know very little about in Europe and is often met with many stereotypes and preconceptions. Thanks to the grant from the IBRA, I had the opportunity at the end of my orthopedic surgery residency to stay for three months in Sao Paulo and follow Dr Mantovani in his daily activities.

After a few days getting used to the local rhythm and getting acclimated to my first winter in the southern hemisphere, I began my IBRA fellowship with Dr Mantovani. I was lucky enough to be able to spend mornings in the consultation room (which I did to improve my Portuguese…) as well as in Professor Rames Mattar's department at the University of Sao Paulo at my convenience. The afternoon was devoted to the operating program of Dr Mantovani.

“Beneficencia Portuguesa” Hospital

Ulnar nerve reconstruction performed by Dr Mantovani

Daily organization

My days were divided between Dr Mantovani and Professor Mattar's departments. The former was located in Beneficienca Portuguese hospital and the latter in the university hospital of Sao Paulo, called Hospital das clinicas. Combining a fellowship in these two complementary units allowed me to have a complete view of how hand surgery is practiced in Sao Paulo. The surgeries were indeed varied. I had the opportunity to spend my mornings in Hospital das clinicas with Professor Mattar's team who is specialized in microsurgery (one the few in Sao Paulo). The main activity was brachial plexus reconstruction and reconstructive microsurgery. I was able to familiarize myself with many procedures less frequently performed in France, such as neurotization, tendon transfer and functional free flaps.

With Dr Mantovani, I gained valuable tools in the management of distal radius fractures including minimally invasive approaches. I also gained a clearer decision-making algorithm in the management of chronic carpal ligaments injuries. Finally, thanks to him I was

trained for several indications and exposed to a variety of techniques in wrist arthroscopy.

At the same time, I was able to take part in very diverse and interesting scientific studies dealing with topics such as robotic surgery, arthroscopy, wrist surgery or distal radius fractures treatment. Various articles are currently being written and will be submitted to international journals soon. A few studies will be presented in my national hand surgery society as well. I also hope to collaborate with Dr Mantovani on different interesting studies in the future.

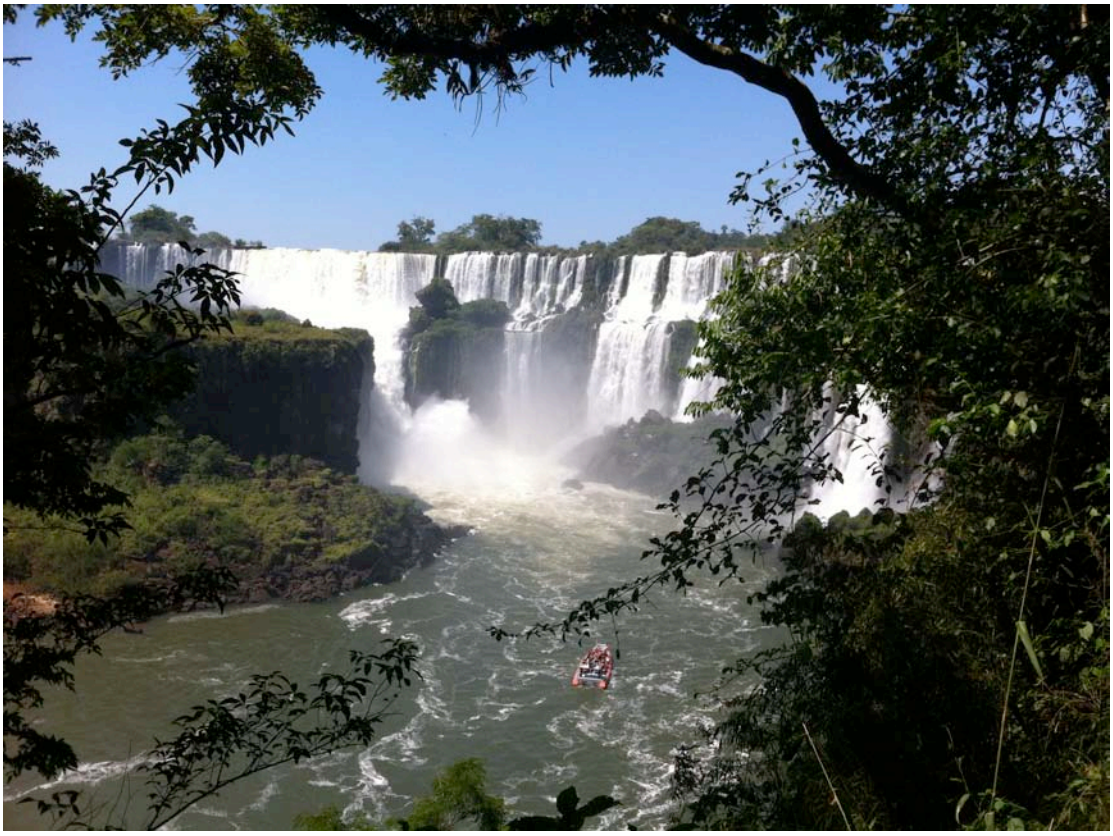
What surprised me most was the economic healthcare system in Brazil. Indeed, the healthcare system is totally different from what I usually see at work in France. In Brazil, patient care is mainly dependent on private insurance. These assurances determine both the location of care and the equipment allotted for the planned surgery. Indeed, after choosing the type of surgical procedure to be performed, the surgeon should obtain the authorization from the insurance to cover its costs. Sometimes, awkward situations arose where the surgeon had to wait several days (or even more) to obtain the insurance agreement or even had to justify the procedure by the means of scientific publications.

Life in Sao Paulo

It is very challenging to summarize such a city, a metropolis. Its cultural richness is set forth by its hundreds of museums as well as the famous MASP, an architectural masterpiece known for its vast collections. Certainly, its diverse population reflects different aspects of a successful immigration policy with many cultural minorities such as Japanese, German, Italian or Lebanese citizens. I spent several hours scrolling through Paulista Avenue, running in Ibirapuera park, and feasting on sushis in Liberbade. I became familiar with “café da manha” and its local abundance of fruit and “sucos”. I also enjoyed taking my time while having an expresso on a busy terrace and feel the atmosphere of this bustling city.

I also visited other landscapes outside Sao Paulo, such as the exceptional Iguaçu region and its waterfalls classified World Heritage by UNESCO as well as the hydroelectric dam of Itaipu, beautiful by its gigantism.

MASP Museum of art of Sao Paulo



Iguaçu falls (Parana state)

Ibirapuera park

In conclusion…

This experience was an eye-opener to me, on how the world could be different and innovative. Despite the cultural gap, geographic and language barriers, I felt close to this population and integrated easily. Despite the obvious huge social disparities, the warm welcoming feeling of such a place that I shall remember after returning to France is that of a second home that was left behind but will always keeps it's door wide open.

In recognition to the opportunity offered to me by receiving this grant from IBRA, I hope I will be able to contribute in the future by sustaining a link between our different cultures and practices in a world of constant connection.

Only a few hours away by plane is a country, that I did not know. Now, I have great memories, adopted habits and especially have met colleagues and friends with whom I hope to keep on building our future world.

With Dr Mantovani after a typical paulistan rain