IBRA Scholarship Report

Information About Scholar and Fellowship
Scholar: Sotero M. Ramos, III, MD, DPBO
Country of Citizenship: Philippines
Name and Country of Training Center: Laketown Orthopaedic Hospital, Saitama Prefecture, Laketown Koshigaya, Japan
Name of Fellowship Director: Professor Satoru Ozeki
Scholarship Type: Type C
Research Project Title: CT Analysis of Hallux Valgus Before and After Lapidus Procedure: A Laketown Orthopaedic Hospital Experience
Scholarship Date: September 1, 2022 – November 30, 2022

Professional and Personal Experience

One year ago, I was searching for a suitable fellowship program for myself and came across the Laketown Orthopaedic Hospital on the internet, which is under IBRA. I sent an e-mail to Professor Satoru Ozeki, as I am interested in taking up foot and ankle as my sub specialty. He advised me to be a member of IBRA, which I did, and he accepted me in his training program. I took up scholarship type C that has a 3-month program with both clinical and research fellowship. Japan has always been very close to my heart hence I selected this institution for my fellowship program.

The date I chose to go to Japan was August 25, 2022 because of the possibility of undergoing quarantine due to the COVID 19 pandemic, however, Japan has already lifted this process at the time. I met Professor Ozeki and his lovely wife, Junko Ozeki, on my first day and we had dinner at a fancy restaurant.

Photo of dinner from left to right: Fellow Dr Ramos, Professor Ozeki, Junko Ozeki.

Professor Ozeki showed me the condominium where I will stay which is just across Laketown Orthopaedic Hospital. The condominium is very clean and very convenient. It is already complete with kitchen untensils, washing machine, bathroom, family hall and two separate bedrooms. Professor already asked me to start early as I was eager to undergo training, so I agreed.

Photo of hospital and condominium: leftmost building is the condominium; rightmost white building is the hospital.

Laketown Orthopaedic Hospital is a specialty hospital with a 53-bed space capacity providing orthopaedic care to patients. The orthopaedic team comprises of 4 competent orthopaedic surgeons: Professor Yasamura, the hospital director, specializing in joint replacement; Professor Ozeki, the director emeritus, specializing in foot and ankle; Dr Ogawa, specializing in foot and ankle as well as knee and shoulder arthroscopy; and Dr Fujii, specializing in shoulder and arthroscopy. The hospital also provides service for orthopaedic trauma patients. The hospital has a very convenient location for fellows, as it is just 5 minutes away from the condominium, 10 minutes away from the mall and 30 minutes away from the nearest train station. There are also good Japanese restaurants that are very close to the hospital.

The schedule that I have for the week are as follows: everyday at 7am, the fellows do the daily ward rounds with the entire team; Mondays and Thursdays is clinic day where Professor Ozeki teaches the fellows to review the imaging, diagnose cases, perform physical examination, and even gives the fellows opportunity to perform the physical examination as well as change the dressing for post operative patients who are following up. Tuesdays and Wednesdays is surgery day

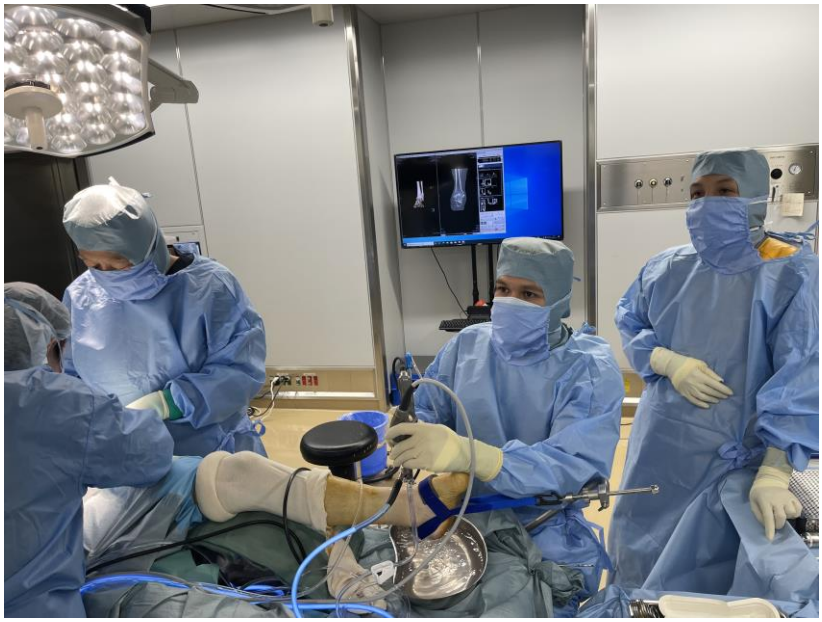


Photo of surgery day from left to right: Professor Ozeki, Fellow Dr Ramos, Fellow Dr Tac.

where we assist the professor for his cases and at times, Professor Ozeki gives us an opportunity to perform ankle arthroscopy. Fridays is research day. At 12 in the afternoon, we go on a break for lunch that is provided by the hospital and it includes a complete meal that is very healthy and delicious. Professor Ozeki also gave us the opportunity to assist in any case that we are interested in aside from foot and ankle cases.

Photo of IBRA office.

Professor Satoru Ozeki is the director emeritus of the hospital and is the fellowship director of the hospital under IBRA. He is very patient to his fellows, treats his fellows like family, has very good skills in communicating with the patients, and has very good surgical skills. There is never a dull moment with

Professor Ozeki as he is a very happy person. He always takes his time whenever I ask him questions, as he always wants me to understand the answers that I seek. During my stay here I had a lot of opportunities to learn. Luckily, November is the month for their annual foot and ankle society meeting where Professor Ozeki took me to Matsuyama, Japan, where I had an opportunity to learn the techniques being used by the Japanese for their patients.

Photo of 47th JSSF Annual Meeting from left to right: Fellow Dr Tac, Professor Ozeki, Fellow Dr Ramos.

Professor Ozeki and I are working on a research regarding hallux valgus where we try to analyze the 3D CT scans of the patients before and after the Lapidus procedure. It is currently an ongoing research where I am the co-author.

There are many cases that I have assisted Professor Ozeki and it is difficult to keep count. Weekly we perform around 5-6 cases and Professor Ozeki allows me to scrub in every case and have an opportunity to be his first assist. Professor Ozeki mainly focuses on foot and ankle reconstruction, foot and ankle sports injuries and tendinopathies and a minority of foot and ankle trauma. I am very much interested in each case that the professor has but the interesting ones in which I gained much skills are the ankle arthroscopy cases, hallux valgus reconstruction, flat foot reconstruction, cavus foot reconstruction and ankle replacement procedures. There is only a small number of foot and ankle surgeons in the Philippines and very few can perform such procedures that I have mentioned specially the ankle arthroscopy and the ankle replacement as my country is not as technologically advanced as Japan. This fellowship training is a very good opportunity to learn each skill as the orthopaedic practice Philippines, although not too advanced in technology, is

somehow at par internationally in most aspects. There are a few procedures that cannot be applied yet to Philippines such as the total talus replacement, as we do not have the technology to produce such implants, and Morton's neuroma tenolysis, as we do not have many patients with the condition, but at least, if I get to encounter these cases, I know now what to do. However most of the procedures that Professor Ozeki does can also be done in the Philippines now that he taught me how. My experience here in Japan is not yet over as Professor Ozeki extended my fellowship period to 7 months and I will be staying here in Japan until April 2023.

The most significant personal experience during my fellowship is that I get to know more about the Japanese culture: how they are strict with time, how they strive to be better each day, how very systematic and organized they are, how they are very patriotic, etc. In this experience, not only did I acquire skills that I can apply to my patients, but I also acquired skills that I can apply to my life, like being punctual, eating healthy and being independent. I also gained a new friend as Professor Ozeki also accepted another fellow from Vietnam, Dr Hoang Long Tac. Most importantly, I have found a second home and family in Japan all because of Professor Ozeki. It is always fun to go back to Japan no matter if the purpose is for vacation or for business.

Photo of Fellows Dr Tac (left) and Dr Ramos (right).

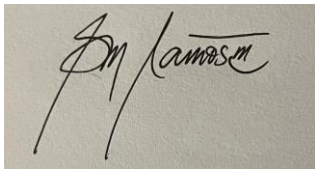
Photo of Fellows Dr Tac (center) and Dr Ramos (rightmost) with operating room staff.

Photo in Matsuyama, Japan from left to right: Dr Ogawa, Fellow Dr Tac, Professor Ozeki, Fellow Dr Ramos, Junko Ozeki.

Closing Words

To the future scholars of IBRA who are interested in taking up sub specialty training for the lower extremity and foot and ankle, Laketown Orthopaedic Hospital under the supervision of Professor Satoru Ozeki is considered one of the best. In my experience, staying here in Japan was very convenient because Professor Ozeki takes care of everything and he considers you part of his family. And so I thank IBRA for making my fellowship training possible, I have learned a lot and acquired many skills and will be bringing the experience back to the Philippines and I'm hoping to put the Philippines within the radar of IBRA and to strengthen that bond further in the near future.

Photo in Matsuyama Japan: Fellow Dr Sotero Ramos, III and Mentor Professor Satoru Ozeki.



Sotero M. Ramos, III, MD, DPBO
IBRA Scholar