WEILL CORNELL SEMINAR in SALZBURG

in collaboration with

Medical University of Vienna

"Surgery"

September 30 – October 6, 2018
Table of Contents

1. Faculty & Group Photo
2. Schedule
3. Faculty Biographies
4. Fellows Contact Information
5. Diaries
SALZBURG WEILL CORNELL SEMINAR SURGERY
September 30 – October 6, 2018

- 35 fellows from 27 different countries and regions
- 10 faculty members from the United States & Austria
- 20 lectures and 2 workshops given by faculty
- 35 interesting case presentations by fellows
- 6 excellent case presentations selected by faculty

Faculty Photo (L–R)
Mia Talmor, MD, FACS; Michael D. Lieberman, MD; Cheguevara Afaneh, MD, FACS, FASMBS; Marita S. Teng, MD, FACS; Michael Bergmann, MD; Gregory Dakin, MD
Group Photo of Faculty and Fellows
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Sunday 30 September</th>
<th>Monday 01 October</th>
<th>Tuesday 02 October</th>
<th>Wednesday 03 October</th>
<th>Thursday 04 October</th>
<th>Friday 05 October</th>
<th>Saturday 06 October</th>
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<td>07:00</td>
<td>BREAKFAST</td>
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<td>08:00</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>Bariatric Surgery</td>
<td>Abdominal Wall</td>
<td>Colon Cancer and</td>
<td>Foregut Surgery for</td>
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<td>Pre-Seminar Test</td>
<td>Gregory Dakin, MD</td>
<td>Reconstruction for</td>
<td>Diverticulosis</td>
<td>Benign Conditions</td>
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<td>Abdominal Wall</td>
<td>Thomas Bachleitner-</td>
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<td>Hernia</td>
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<td>Mia Talmor, MD, FACS</td>
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<td>09:00</td>
<td>Inguinal Hernia</td>
<td>Inflammatory Bowel</td>
<td>Breast Cancer</td>
<td>Gastric Cancer</td>
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<td>Surgery</td>
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<td>Gregory Dakin, MD</td>
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<td>10:30</td>
<td>Rectal Cancer</td>
<td>Plastic Surgery</td>
<td>Breast Surgery</td>
<td>Robotic and Minimally</td>
<td>Liver Surgery</td>
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<td>Surgery</td>
<td>for the General</td>
<td>Oncoplasty</td>
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<td>Michael Bergmann, MD</td>
<td>Surgeon</td>
<td>Florian Fitzal, MD, MBA, FEBS</td>
<td>Cheguevara Afaneh, MD, FACS, FASMBS</td>
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<td>11:30</td>
<td>2018 Thyroid Surgery</td>
<td>Surgical Research</td>
<td>Reconstruction for</td>
<td>HIPEC</td>
<td>Bile Duct and</td>
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<td>Update</td>
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<td>Breast Cancer</td>
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<td>Marita S. Teng, MD, FACS</td>
<td>Michael Bergmann, MD</td>
<td>Mia Talmor, MD, FACS</td>
<td>Thomas Bachleitner-Hofmann, MD</td>
<td>Klaus Kaczirek, MD</td>
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<td>12:30</td>
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<td>14:00</td>
<td>Proctology and</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<td>Post-Seminar Test</td>
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<td>Fellows' Case</td>
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<td>18:00</td>
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<td>WELCOME RECEPTION</td>
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<td>GRADUATION DINNER</td>
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<td>&amp; DINNER</td>
<td>FACULTY DINNER IN</td>
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WEILL CORNELL SEMINAR in SALZBURG

"Surgery"

September 30 – October 6, 2018

FACULTY
Wolfgang Aulitzky, MD is the Medical Director of the American Austrian Foundation. He is Associate Dean for International Medicine and Distance Learning, Adjunct Prof. of Clinical Urology and Adjunct Prof. of Clinical Reproductive Medicine at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University/New York Presbyterian Hospital. In 2016, he was appointed Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics in the Associated Faculty of the Perelman School of Medicine at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. He is also Associate Prof. of Urology at the Medical University of Innsbruck and Visiting Professor at the Medical University of Vienna. Amongst others he is a member of the American, German and Austrian Societies of Urology and was awarded the Zuckerkandlpreis of the Austrian Society of Urology in 1989. In 1995 he received the Silver Medal, in 2007 the Golden Medal for Merits to the Republic of Austria and in 2014 the cross of honor of the Land Salzburg. As Director of the Medical Program of the American Austrian Foundation he has initiated the Open Medical Institute, a scientific and educational collaboration of Weill Cornell and the NewYork Presbyterian Hospital, the Children Hospital of Philadelphia, Duke University, Columbia University, the Cleveland Clinic and leading hospitals in Austria. Dr. Aulitzky earned his medical degree at the University of Innsbruck in 1977, was a research associate at the University of Uppsala, Sweden and the Rockefeller University, New York. He received his training as an urologist at the University of Innsbruck and the General Hospital of Salzburg. He is the author of more than 140 publications on Urology, Andrology and Health Care issues and is co-author of books on basic and clinical urology/andrology.

Wolfgang Aulitzky, MD

Director, Open Medical Institute
American Austrian Foundation

Associate Dean and Gerhard Andlinger Professor for International Medicine & Distance Learning
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Adjunct Professor of Clinical Reproductive Medicine
Weill Medical College of Cornell University

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Michael D. Lieberman, MD (Course Director) serves as Director of Surgery at The Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health; Director of Surgical Oncology at the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital /Weill Cornell Medical Center; and Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery, Department of Surgery, Weill Medical College of Cornell University. Dr. Lieberman is highly experienced in a wide array of surgical procedures and specializes in the areas of soft-tissue malignancies, including melanoma, and gastrointestinal malignancies, including cancers of the pancreas, stomach, colon and rectum, and hepatobiliary system. Dr. Lieberman completed his surgical training at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and his surgical oncology fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. Certified by the American Board of Surgery and National Board of Medical Examiners, Dr. Lieberman utilizes the latest innovations in surgical techniques, including minimally invasive laparoscopic procedures, to minimize patient discomfort and promote recovery from surgical procedures. He performs laparoscopic procedures on the colon, gallbladder, liver, pancreas, spleen, and stomach. Dr. Lieberman is a member of a myriad of professional organizations, including the American College of Surgeons, Society of Surgical Oncology, and Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract. He has also received several awards, including the New Jersey Medical School's Dr. Prystowsky Award for Patient Care, University of Pennsylvania Hospital's Surgical Scholar Award, and American Cancer Society Career Development Award. In addition, he has published numerous articles and nine book chapters, many of which are devoted to surgery and nutritional issues in patients with cancer.

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Michael Gnant, MD, PhD (Co-Course Director) is a Professor of Surgery and Director of the Department of Surgery at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria, where he also heads the Department of General and Visceral Surgery and serves as President of the Austrian Breast & Colorectal Cancer Study Group. He is co-coordinator of the Comprehensive Cancer Center, Vienna and has been co-chair of the renowned St. Gallen Consensus Panel for Early Breast Cancer since 2015. Dr. Gnant graduated in medicine in Vienna (1988) and subsequently specialized in surgery (1994) and surgical oncology. He also worked as a Visiting Scientist at the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, USA (1997–1999). Dr. Gnant’s research interests include several fields of surgical oncology, in particular breast and pancreatic cancer, immunotherapy, bone-targeted treatment for tumour micrometastases, and pathway-directed therapies such as mTOR and CDK4/6 inhibition, and he has been the Principal Investigator of over 30 clinical trials in these fields. The author of more than 400 original peer-reviewed papers with an H-index of 50, Dr. Gnant has presented over 1000 lectures at national and international meetings. He is the recipient of multiple awards including the prestigious Claudia von Schilling Prize from the Medical University of Hannover. Dr. Gnant is involved in many scientific societies including ASCO, AACR, ACS, Breast International Group (BIG), EORTC, ESSO, EUSOMA and UICC. He currently serves as an executive board member of BIG, is an independent reviewer and IDMC member for the EORTC, UICC and other international bodies, and is a scientific reviewer and process evaluator for the European Union. Dr. Gnant is also Editor-in-Chief, editorial board member and reviewer for many top-tier peer-reviewed journals including The Lancet, The New England Journal of Medicine and Journal of Clinical Oncology.

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Cheguevara Afaneh, MD, FACS, FASMBS is an Assistant Professor of Surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College. He serves as the Program Director for the Advanced GI Minimally Invasive Surgery Fellowship. He specializes in Robotic General and Bariatric Surgery. He has published over 60 peer-reviewed manuscripts and authored more than 20 textbook chapters in the field. He has won numerous awards over his career, including Faculty of the Year Teaching Award (2017) and was named to 2018 New York Times Super Doctors Rising Stars list. He has lectured regionally, nationally and internationally on robotics and minimally invasive surgery. He has successfully completed over 850 robotic surgeries. He serves on multiple national societal committees including the Advanced GI Surgery Training Taskforce for the Society for Surgeons of the Alimentary Tract (SSAT), Flexible Endoscopy and Clinical Issues Committee for the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), local chair of the Admission Committee for the American College of Surgeons, and the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgery (SAGES) Champion for Weill Cornell Medical College.

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Fellowship Director, Advanced GI & Minimally Invasive Surgery
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Thomas Bachleitner-Hofmann, MD is a surgical oncologist who specializes in the treatment of peritoneal surface malignancies using cytoreductive surgery (CRS) and hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy (HIPEC). In addition, he is focusing on minimally invasive colorectal cancer surgery and has recently established a colorectal robotic surgery program at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria. Dr. Bachleitner-Hofmann grew up Salzburg and Vienna and completed his medical studies at the University of Vienna and his surgical residency at the Department of Surgery, Medical University of Vienna. From 2006 to 2008, he spent two year’s of postdoctoral research at the Colorectal Service of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, in the laboratory of Dr. Martin R. Weiser. In 2011, Dr. Bachleitner-Hofmann newly established the Peritoneal Surface Malignancy Program at the Medical University of Vienna and subsequently authored the current National Treatment Guideline on Peritoneal Surface Malignancies using cytoreductive surgery and HIPEC in Austria. Dr. Bachleitner-Hofmann’s main research interest lies within colorectal cancer oncology, with particular emphasis on peritoneal surface oncology. His articles have been published in Journals such as Clinical Cancer Research, Blood and Molecular Cancer Therapeutics. His research activities have earned him grants from the Jubilee Fund of Austrian National Bank of Austria as well as numerous prizes, including the Theodor Bilroth Prize of the Austrian Surgical Society as well as the AACR Aflac Inc. Award from the American Association for Cancer Research. In addition to his commitments as a surgical oncologist, Thomas Bachleitner-Hofmann has studied piano at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna and is a Third Prize Laureate from the International Piano Competition “Stravinsky Awards”, IL (USA). He regularly gives charitable concerts, whose beneficiaries include humanitarian organizations such as the Austrian Red Cross or Doctors Without Borders. In 2014, Dr. Bachleitner-Hofmann received the Heinrich Treichl Humanitarian Prize of the Austrian Red Cross for his achievements. Dr. Bachleitner-Hofmann lives in Vienna with his wife Barbara and children Clara and Felix.

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Michael Bergmann, MD received his MD at the Medical University of Vienna (MUV). After a postdoctoral fellowship with Prof. Palese at Mount Sinai Medical School, New York on genetic engineering of influenza A virus he did a residency in general surgery at the MUV and specialized in colorectal surgery. Currently he serves as a senior group leader in this field at the department. In 2003 he became Associate Professor of Surgery and in 2010, Head of the Surgical Research Labs which host more than 10 translational oriented research groups. Dr. Bergmann co-authored the Austrian Guidelines for familial colorectal cancer as well as the Guidelines for Colorectal Cancer of the MUV. Since 2015 he was substantial in the establishment of the robotic program for rectal cancer surgery. Apart of his clinical career, Dr. Bergmann established a translational research oriented research group in the field of molecular oncology. His group established the first oncolytic influenza A virus, contributed to the understanding of toll-like-3 receptor signalling in apoptosis and described the contribution of retro-transposons to telomere regulation in tumor cells. With respect to translation research he is interested to understand the contribution of the tumor-immune microenvironment to the prognosis of human cancer. Dr. Bergmann lives in Vienna and has twins at the age of 17.

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Gregory Dakin, MD, FACS received his undergraduate degree with honors from Colgate University and obtained his medical degree from the New York University School of Medicine in 1997. He completed his general surgery residency at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York in 2003, including a research fellowship in laparoscopy. Upon finishing residency, he entered into a clinical fellowship in minimally invasive surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College and the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Dr. Dakin joined the faculty of the Department of Surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College in 2004 and has reached the rank of Associate Professor of Surgery. Dr. Dakin devotes considerable time to the development of physicians in training, particularly in laparoscopy and simulation. He serves as Director of the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Program. His clinical interests include bariatric and minimally invasive abdominal surgery. Dr. Dakin has published extensively in the field of laparoscopy, hernia, and bariatrics and is an active member of several surgical societies. He lives in New Jersey with his wife, Dr. Marita Teng, and children Zoe and Alec.

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Florian Fitzal, MD, MBA, FEBS started in 2003 as a member of the surgical breast unit (General Surgery). He is currently deputy chief of the Breast Health Center at the Medical University Vienna. Between 2013 and 2016 he was Head of the Breast Health Center, Sisters of Mercy, in Linz Austria with 320 new diagnosed cases per year. He is an international known expert for oncoplastic surgery and breast cancer surgery. As clinical case manager he is involved in the national screening program, diagnosis as well as treatment of early, locally advanced and metastasized breast cancer. He published 143 articles with an h-Index of 24 (Web of Science 08/2018) and he is co-investigator of several prospective clinical trials. Together with his friend Peter Schrenk he published two educational books for oncoplastic surgery which are registered for the European Board of Surgeons Exam UEMS. He is a teacher of the European Board of Surgery, presidial member of the Austrian Breast and Colorectal Cancer Study Group (ABCSG), the Austrian Society of Senology as well as the Austrian society of oncologic surgery. He is a co-founder of the Oncoplastic Breast Consortium (OPBC). He personally operates 200 primary breast cancer cases per year.

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Klaus Kaczirek, MD is a general surgeon specializing in visceral surgery with a focus in oncological and endocrine surgery. He is currently a senior physician in the Department of Surgery at the Medical University of Vienna and head of the hepatobiliary surgery unit. Dr. Kaczirek studied at the Medical University of Vienna and in 1999 received his doctorate in medicine. He is member of a number of societies including the Austrian Society of Surgical Oncology, the European Society of Endocrine Surgeons, and the European Society of Surgical Oncology. He is also a peer reviewer for multiple surgical journals such as the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, the Journal of Clinical Oncology, British Journal of Surgery and the European Journal of Surgical Oncology.

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Mia Talmor, MD, FACS is the first female surgeon appointed to the full-time faculty of the Division of Plastic Surgery at New York Presbyterian Hospital. Dr. Talmor is one of the few double Board certified surgeons in the country. She is a diplomat of both The American Board of Surgery, as well as of The American Board of Plastic Surgery, having completed the recertification process with both Boards in 2011. Dr. Talmor was most recently inducted to The American Association of Plastic Surgeons, representing an elite group of academic plastic surgeons throughout the country. In addition to her excellence as a plastic surgeon, Dr. Talmor has distinguished herself in the scientific community through her research, scientific presentations and publications. She has received numerous prestigious grants and awards from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, The American College of Surgeons, The American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, The New York Regional Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, as well as from the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Talmor specializes in aesthetic and reconstructive surgery. She offers the most technologically advanced procedures available to enhance the appearance and self-esteem of her patients. Dr. Mia Talmor graduated Cornell University Medical College with a doctor of medicine with honors in research in May of 1993. She is currently an associate professor of clinical surgery at The Weill Cornell Medical School, and an attending surgeon at New York Presbyterian Hospital. In September of 2010, Dr. Talmor became the president of The New York Regional Society of Plastic Surgeons, which represents 180 board-certified plastic surgeons in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. On July 1, 1996, Mia was appointed a research fellow after receiving the American College of Surgeons Resident Research Scholarship. She worked under Dr. Ralph Steinman at Rockefeller University in New York. Dr. Steinman was awarded the Noble Prize in Medicine in 2011. She continued her study of the dendritic cell in rat allograft limb transplantation, which earned her the Peter J. Gingrass, MD Memorial Award from the Plastic Surgery Research Council in medical school. This research led to numerous publications and another grant research grant from the Plastic Surgery Education Foundation. To her credit, Mia has authored over forty scientific papers, five book chapters and has made numerous scientific presentations. Her most recent research focuses on new techniques in breast reconstruction, safety issues related to cosmetic surgery, as well as on new technologies.

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WEILL CORNELL SEMINAR in SALZBURG

"Surgery"

September 30 – October 6, 2018

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**September 29, Saturday Evening.** Having travelled from Mexico City to Frankfurt, we, my colleague, Vanesa and I arrived in Salzburg for the first night at the beautiful and quiet place: Schloss Arenberg. The young man at the reception was very kind with us despite the time. It was almost midnight.

**September 30, Sunday.** I woke up early and after breakfast, we went to explore some interesting places like the Hohensalzburg Castle. The museums were closed on Sunday. At the welcome reception Dr. Wolfgang Aulitzky (Medical Director of the American Austrian Foundation- AAF), spoke about the Salzburg seminars and Austria. The main goals of the foundation were explained to us. Some of the faculty members were presented to us. Dr. Gregory Dakin from New York, Dr. Marita Teng also from N.Y. and Dr. Michael Bergmann (an important head of surgical research at the Vienna Medical University, extraordinary scientific cofounder of Vacthera). Later on, we enjoyed a delicious dinner. The participants of the seminar came from different countries such as Kazakhstan, Ukraine, the Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Latvia, etc.

**October 1, Monday.** Everybody woke up early and after breakfast the day started with the pre-test. The coffee break was from 10:00 to 10:30. After that Dr. Michael Bergmann spoke about Rectal Cancer Surgery and Dr. Marita Teng spoke about Thyroid Surgery Update. Both of the topics were very interesting and actual. Lunch was every day from 12:30 to 14:00 and after that, Dr. Bergman talked about faecal incontinence, obstipation and rectal cancer. He is a specialist in this medical field. Last, the faculty gave us some ideas about how we can present a case and they also gave us some examples. We also listened to the history of the AAF and the Open Medical Institute.
October 2, Tuesday. We started the day with breakfast. The first topic was about Bariatric Surgery presented by Dr. Dakin and then Dr. Bergmann talked about Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Surgical Research. Dr. Mia Talmor spoke about Plastic Surgery for the General Surgeon and that was very interesting, because all of the fellows are general surgeons. Lunch was served as a buffet and after that the fellows’ case presentations started with different topics like: gastric endometriosis, cases of breast cancer, Meckel’s diverticulum, etc. The faculty advised us with their experience and it was very exemplary. Later on, we did a short visit to downtown and then we returned to Schloss Arenberg for dinner.

October 3, Wednesday. Dr. Mia Talmor talked about the Abdominal Wall Reconstruction for Abdominal Wall Hernia and Reconstruction for Breast Cancer Surgery. Dr. Florian Fitzal from Vienna talked about Breast Cancer and its multidisciplinary management and oncoplasty. After that, the afternoon was free and we went to see Mozart’s house and the Mirabell Castle and bought some chocolates and other souvenirs.

October 4, Thursday. The morning started with lectures about Colon Cancer, Diverticulosis and HIPEC (Hyperthermic Intra-peritoneal Chemotherapy) with Dr. Thomas Bachleitner from the University of Vienna. Dr. Michael Lieberman talked to us about Gastric Cancer Surgery and before Lunch Dr. Cheguevara Afaneh from New York showed us his experience in Robotic and Minimally Invasive Surgery. In the Afternoon, the second part of the fellows presented their cases. I realized, that only eight slides were required for one presentation and it was very difficult for me to present in a short time but it was a very interesting experience. My presentation was about a case of Biliary Duct Injury and the other fellows contributed to my work with their comments. Other topics were about Obstructive Jaundice, Angiomyolipoma of the liver, liver sarcoidosis, a case of giant hernia, a case of sarcoma, etc. All of us received comments from the faculty. After Dinner, there was a chamber music concert with two pianists: Heghine Rapyan, she was born in Armenia and the other pianist was Min-Hao-Tsal.

October 5, Friday. Unhappy, that it is the last day of the seminar...we finish the seminar with topics on Foregut Surgery and Benign Conditions, Pancreatic Cancer Surgery, Bile Duct and Gallbladder and Liver Surgery. This week was a time for new experience, getting to know the faculty and fellows from different parts of the world; 35 people from different countries, talking about their costumes, food, education and medicine. It was a great experience. I do not have sufficient words to express my gratitude.

Adriana Vargas, MD (Mexico)
**SEMINAR DIARY FROM FELLOW**

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**September 30 – October 6, 2018**

**September 30, Sunday.** I arrived in Austria at Vienna International Airport after 12 hours of flight from Entebbe International Airport (Uganda); I took a train to Vienna city to spend some hours in a Café for refreshing and waiting for my next train to Salzburg. Vienna is a very nice, peaceful and organized city, located in the western part of Austria. Then came my train to Salzburg, I continued my journey for about 2 hours 40 minutes to reach the Salzburg Main Train Station (Hauptbahnhof). From there, I took the city bus No. 6 to Volksgarten, then I got out from the bus stop, crossed the road, and continued walking in the stress Arenbergstrasse to reach my final destination: Schloss Arenberg, a nice place with a fantastic garden. I almost arrived at 6:45 pm, found some fellows standing in the main lobby. I first got my registration documents and my room key, and went straight away to my room to store my suitcase. After the wine toast, we had a short speech and seminar introduction by the Medical Director of the AAF, Prof. Wolfgang Aulitzky; then we had a tasty dinner together, and started the process of “Getting to know each other”. I had the privilege to meet fellow surgeons from Europe, Asia, America and Africa (Tanzania, Ethiopia and Nigeria).

**October 1, Monday.** Early in the morning, we started with a tasty breakfast, all of us sitting in the coffee room, hesitating to engage into deep discussions at that time. It was raining slightly outside, not a good time to walk around in the Schloss Arenberg garden. We then went to the Grand Lecture Hall to do a Pre-Seminar test; this test was actually a very good way to introduce us into different contents of the topics we were about to discover during the week. After the test, we started with the first lecture; it was quite interesting with uptodate Evidence based Medicine on laparoscopic and robotic approaches of managing inguinal hernias, focusing on minimizing the complications. Prof. Gregory Dakin ended his lecture with US-style “Jeopardy” questions to challenge us on anatomy, clinical presentation, management and complications of inguinal hernias. Then after, we had several lectures on thyroid surgery, rectal cancer, proctology and pelvic floor surgery, and of course, a coffee break and tasty lunch were served. In the afternoon, we continued with the remaining lectures, and finished with an OMI/AAF Presentation by Ms. Stephanie Faschang. We all planned initially to get out and join people in the mood of October Fest in Salzburg city, but unfortunately it was then raining heavily outside at this time. We had no choice to stay in our rooms, and appeared at Dinner time. From that second dinner, we started interacting more frequently, and I initiated a Whatsapp group for better planning of our activities. The weather was still rainy, and a small group of us went up in the 5th floor of the Schloss Arenberg in the lounge for playing “table football” until late in the evening.
October 2, Tuesday. I woke up a bit earlier that day, went to the Gym room for some minutes, and later joined colleagues in the breakfast room. The group atmosphere became remarkably noisier since people had started connecting easily, exchanging about their surgical experiences, and in-country realities. At 8 o’clock, we had an uptodate lecture on bariatric surgery, inflammatory bowel disease. At 10:00 am, we went outside in the main entrance of the Schloss Arenberg for our group picture before going for coffee. About 30 minutes later, we went back to the Grand Hall lecture room to continue with the topics on the principles of plastic surgery and Research in Surgery. At lunch time, we all noticed that the day was still rainy just like the day before. We had our tasty lunch with special dessert. Afternoon was the time for fellows’ presentations. I personally learnt a lot from this session where fellows presented their interesting cases to be shared with colleagues. We had 18 presentations that day, and I was among the presenters. We finished around 05:30 pm. Again at this time, the weather was on-and-off rainy. It became a little bit challenging to go out of the Schloss Arenberg because of rain. A small group had decided to go out despite the rain, and they went to the Volksgarten. On my side, I was walking around the Schoss Arenberg garden, but I couldn’t stay longer with the cold weather. We all went to the dinner in the evening, and started discussing the potential places to visit during our free afternoon of Wednesday.

October 3, Wednesday. This was an exciting day for me, since it was the birthday of my second daughter. I woke up earlier to get prepared for a busy day with the free afternoon, and also to video-call my little family; I also took my time to wish a “Happy Unification Day” to my German friends, and colleagues. As a routine then, I went to the breakfast room to join colleagues; there was only one major talk: where to spend our free afternoon. The majority was planning to go and visit Europark for shopping, and some other colleagues wanted indeed a free walk in the city. Before lecture, almost everyone was trying to set up his/her mind on where he/she would be going to spend the free afternoon. After finishing our breakfast, we went for lectures on abdominal wall reconstruction, breast cancer, oncoplasty and breast reconstructions. In the afternoon, just after having lunch, the weather was both cloudy and sunny, and suitable for discovering the city of Salzburg. Many small groups were set up according to their preference of visit, and I joined a small group of 5 fellows planning to walk around the city. In our crew, we decided first to climb the small hill with stairs to the “view point” of Salzburg town, then went down to walk through the bridge, and visited also several places. Everyone was enjoying the walk since we have been staying in the Schloss Arenberg from arrival. In the evening, everyone was back for dinner, posting pictures of the day in our newly created Whatsapp group, and discussing the findings from the tour. Late in the evening, we went out with 4 of our colleagues to watch the Soccer match of Liverpool and Naples; we had so much fun and came back to continue watching the match in our rooms.

October 4, Thursday. After our routine moment in the breakfast room, we started with the new series of lectures: Colonic cancer/ diverticulosis, gastric cancer, robotic/minimally invasive surgery and HIPEC. The morning lectures were very interesting in view that current evidences were almost inducing a surgical practice change in our mind. After lunch, we had the second group of 17 presentations of fellows’ cases. I had the privilege to be part of the fellows’ committee to assess one presentation; it was so much fun, but I needed to be objective at the same time. In the evening, we had our tasty dinner as usual, and then we went up to dress up nicely for the Chamber Music at 8:30 pm. We had a very nice evening with the 2 piano artists: Mrs. Heghine Rapyan and Mr. Min-Hao TSAL. Both are talented artists since childhood. Everyone was hypnotized with the sound of their music from the piano. They played almost all pieces with four hands piano. Then later at the end of the music, we went down in the main Lobby for toasting, and hung around until late evening. We had a very nice evening with fellows and faculty, and the atmosphere was much nosier comparing than expected.
October 5, Friday. I woke up, went to the fitness room for some minutes for morning exercises, then went back to my room for Bible meditation, and some reading. During the breakfast time, I realized that it was going to be our last day of the seminar in the Grand Hall lecture. As a group, we started our morning exchanges and talks, connecting more between us, building potential future surgical networks. At the same time, most of the fellows were also thinking on how to improve their score for the next coming Post-seminar test in the afternoon. At 8:00 am, we had lectures on foregut surgery with laparoscopic approaches, pancreatic cancer, liver, bile duct and gallbladder laparoscopic surgery. The morning was full of new evidence-based medicine teaching, challenging us to revise our practice based on current data. We had our last lunch together, and an interactive moment with the faculty concerning several surgical challenges.

Personally, I was impressed by the efforts that surgeons put nowadays to push the barriers of surgical trainings beyond the limits. I also discovered a variety of complex procedures done all over the world. In addition, in the research aspect, I was delighted by one statement made by Prof. Michael Bergmann: “...the best researcher in Medicine should be a Surgeon, since he has the possibility of integrating several things from theories to clinical practice, and then after he can criticize every finding with his 2 eyes intra-op, and in the follow up of his patients; he may have the time to come back and change the course of the disease if possible whenever he is charge...” Hahaha (laugh), this reminded me the night of a surgeon who had made an intra-operative mistake, and thinking on how to prevent it in the future; the following morning, there would be probably a new theory or belief based on that mistake, and later he can start generating research questions (personal experience).

To conclude, in the name of the group of surgeons attending this Salzburg Surgery seminar 2018, I would like to express my gratitude to OMI/AAF organizing committee. Everything was perfect, well organized, and excellent; the logistic part was in high standards, nice and clean rooms. The reception and kitchen staffs are very friendly and amazing 😊. In short, we all seemed to achieve our objective of updating our knowledge in a suitable environment, and also of building new connections from all over the world, learning without borders thanks to your diligent commitment.

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