



**APOA** Asia Pacific  
Orthopaedic Association

# CONNECTION

e-Newsletter

DECEMBER 2021



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## President's Message

Shoichi Kokubun



Dear APOA members,

The COVID-19 pandemic is still restricting our lives, especially in terms of face-to-face meetings involving a large number of participants and of travelling abroad. Luckily enough, various means of online communication have been popularized. Despite having been run fully virtually, the 21st APOA Congress held from July 29th to 31st this year was a great success with over 1,000 participants on each of the 3 meeting days. I hereby congratulate again Dato Dr. Syed Alsagoff as Congress President and Professor Mahmut Doral as APOA President, both of whom had been waiting for the Congress to resume after being postponed by one year, on their overcoming all difficulties caused by the pandemic and successful completion of their duties.

Four months have passed since the online election of the Executive Committee (EXCO) members and Chairs of the Standing Committees and the subsequent handover of the APOA Presidency at the last Congress. Though interaction with other associations or societies, especially meeting and talking in person is one of the reasons for existence of international societies like APOA, no request of attendance other than online video messages to any scientific meeting inside or outside of our region has been received.

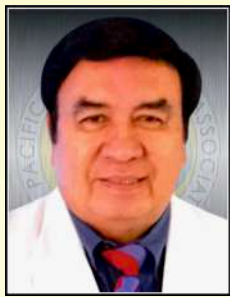
Therefore, the EXCO and the Standing Committees are concentrating on consolidating our administration status following the 6-item business plan.

The Constitution Review Committee (CRC) (Chair: Dr. David Fang, Hong Kong) was formed this past September, and through the course of 5 meetings, has just finished reviewing ambiguous and unclear parts in the current Constitution. Following the decision made at the 2nd EXCO Meeting in Hong Kong on November 5, 2018, the EXCO has been preparing to apply for a company limited by guarantee with the status as a tax-exempt charity, which requires approval by the Inland Revenue Department in Hong Kong. Soon after receiving the recommended amendments from the CRC, the EXCO will refine the Constitution with the aid of a Hong Kong lawyer to fulfill the requirements for approval, and will thereafter submit it for evaluation by Hong Kong authorities. Once a favorable reply or instructions for modification are received, the refined or further refined Constitution will be circulated for approval by the Council. Let's hope that APOA as a tax exempt company will become a reality within the current term.

I would like to describe two great figures in the history of APOA from the perspective of my relation with them: Prof. Arthur R Hodgson and

and Prof Isaharu Miki. Prof Hodgson was the founding Chairman (1961 – 1975) of the Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, University of Hong Kong and the proposer of the Western Pacific Orthopaedic Association (WPOA), presently APOA, founded in 1962. I learnt spinal surgery from him at his department in 1974. Prof Miki was the founding Chairman (1942 – 1949) of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan, of which I was the fifth Chairman (1995 – 2006). He moved to Tokyo University to become the third Chairman (1949 – 1965) and, as the first President of WPOA, organized its 1st Scientific Meeting in Unzen-Fukuoka-Osaka-Kyoto, Japan in 1965. I recall the two figures and encourage myself when I, as President of APOA, face difficulties in its administration.

I would also like to introduce the APOA Executive Committee:



Lewy Pasion  
*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*



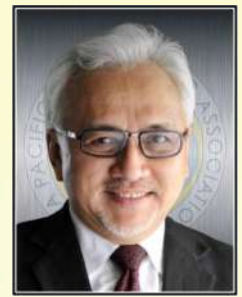
Jamal Ashraf  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*



Mahmut Nedim Doral  
*Imm. Past President*



Arif Khan  
*Secretary General*



Syed A L Alsagoff  
*Treasurer*



Kenneth Cheung  
*Editor JOS*



Jae Yoon Chung  
*Member At Large*



Mark Blackney  
*Member At Large*



Syed Shahidul Islam  
*Member At Large*



David Choon  
*Congress Comm Chair*

Last, I hope the COVID situation improves soon so that we are able to have a face-to-face 22nd Congress in Manila, Philippines on 24 – 26 November, 2022, where we will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of our Association.

Yours sincerely,

**Shoichi Kokubun, MD, PhD**  
Professor Emeritus, Tohoku University  
Sendai, Japan  
APOA President 2021-2022

Making Every Connection Matter

## Secretary General's Musing

Arif Khan



Dear APOA members,

The scourge of Covid-19 rages on. We are still facing lockdowns in various countries. Just like other aspects of life, it has also seriously affected the physical academic activities of APOA. However, it has also opened new horizons for us. The success of the recently held virtual APOA Congress at Kuala Lumpur is an example of the enormous opportunities provided by the use of online technologies. Eleven halls were streamed simultaneously and 365 free papers were presented, attended by more than eleven hundred participants. Organizers of the APOA Congress 2021 deserve big applause for doing a wonderful job. Congress Committee, under its Chairman Prof. David Choon, is in close liaison with the APOA Congress 2022 organizers. If the pandemic situation improves, we should expect to have a great congress in Manila in November 2022.

The new Executive Board along with standing committees took over at the end of the congress, inheriting the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic. Making full use of virtual platforms, the Executive Committee is conducting all its activities online. The first challenge taken over by the Executive Committee was to review the constitution of APOA. The Constitution Review Committee has almost completed its job and soon will

present the final amended draft of the APOA constitution to Executive Committee. The next challenge is the smooth transition of APOA into an APOA Limited. The ExCo is negotiating the task with the legal firm in Hong Kong and hopefully will complete the process in the next few months.

Despite the pandemic, all Standing Committees, have started working to achieve their targets. Education Committee, under its chairman Onder Aydingoz, is exploring various opportunities to promote subspecialty training amongst young APOA members. The News Letter Committee, under its young chairperson Azeta Arif, has already started work on the website and newsletter, and the current issue of "CONNECTION" is the reflection of their hard work. They are also working with Dr Jamal Ashraf, my predecessor, on compiling the history of APOA and very soon will develop a document on the fantastic history of APOA and its legends. Finance Committee under its chairman Christian Fang, is exploring various options to improve the financial situation of APOA, so more funds can be spent on APOA fellowships. Disaster response Committee, Membership Committee and Young Surgeons Forum are also working hard to achieve their targets.

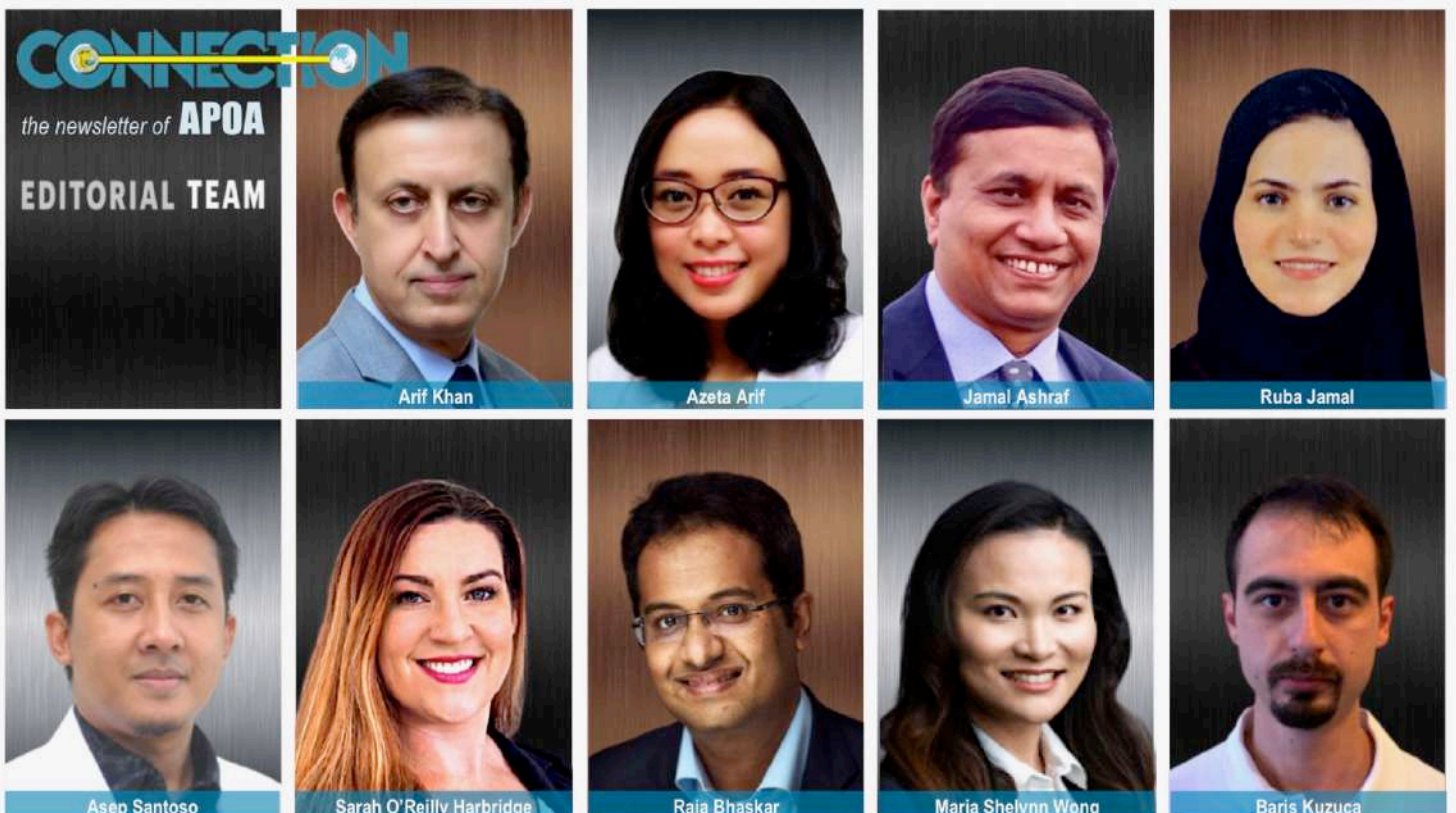
The recently formed Osteoporosis and Fragility section and Women Advocacy Society

are amongst the most active sections of APOA. Although formed recently, the Women Advocacy Society enjoys lots of support amongst APOA nations. Trauma section has continued its pace in academic activities on virtual platforms and its webinars have become a very important source of information for Orthopaedic and Trauma surgeons. Spine section, under the leadership of S. Rajasekaran, has recently started virtual APSS spine fellowship. If successful, this could become an example for other sections to be followed.

At the end, I would like to mention those friends, colleagues and mentors who left us during the pandemic. They would always be in our thoughts and prayers. Let's pray that the pandemic is over soon and we don't lose any more of our friends due to this devastating disease.

Sincerely Yours

**Mohammad Arif Khan**  
APOA Secretary General



Expand Your Mind; Change Your World

## Editorial

Azeta Arif



The APOA recognizes that the scourge of COVID-19 is alarming, unprecedented and challenging. Across the Asia Pacific region it presents as a rapidly evolving set of circumstances, thereby placing a massive strain on the healthcare systems and providers. It has put forth difficult choices on all of us: and drastically altered the course of educational activities across the globe.

The pandemic has had a disruptive impact on all of our lives. It's has fundamentally challenged long established certainties about what we think is safe and what we believe is healthy. The COVID-19 crisis has shown us the true value of information that is scientific, evidence-based and comparable across countries. It has taught us many lessons, like the value of online education, and I feel we will emerge from it strengthened and enriched. The pandemic taught us how, together, we can make a difference to people's lives. It put forth the true importance of family and friends. Let's not let these lessons go in vain.

A connection is the energy that exists between two people when they feel seen, heard and valued. APOA is an association that provides a platform for connections to develop between orthopedic surgeons of 24 countries, so after a lot of discussions, the Editorial board decided to name the APOA Newsletter: CONNECTION.

Let me take this opportunity to introduce you to the members of the Newsletter & Website committee. The immediate past secretary general Dr Jamal Ashraf and the secretary general Dr Arif Khan will guide my team of young, enthusiastic surgeons: Baris Kuzuca (Turkey), Ruba Jamal (Saudi Arabia), Raja Bhaskar (India), Maria Shelynn Wong (Malaysia), Asep Santoso (Indonesia) and Sarah O'Reilly-Harbridge (Australia).

These new conditions and traveling restrictions have had an impact on our educational activities. All academic activities like workshops and symposia, have had to be adjusted to the new model of e-learning. APOA has been rather successful in its e-learning initiatives through the 2021 Congress and regular webinars.

Lastly, being a dreamer, I believe that inspite of all the changes, many things have remained intact: our spirit to keep learning and explore new things has not changed. Hence I look forward to seeing you in person soon. As we navigate the next few months together, I appreciate your support and send wishes of health & safety to you and your loved ones.

**Azeta Arif**  
Chair – Newsletter Committee  
Indonesia

“I practice medicine with unconditional love, the way you are with your children. You don’t expect anything back. But it does come back to you.”

Freddie H. fu

## In Memoriam

Freddie H. Fu



The recent passing of our great mentor and friend, Professor Freddie H Fu has come as a great shock to many of us in the Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association. Dr. Fu, as he is fondly known, was the David Silver Professor and Chairman of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Besides Sports Medicine, Dr. Fu also held appointments as professor of physical therapy, in health & physical activity and mechanical engineering, and served as the head team physician for the University of Pittsburgh Athletic Department. A native of Hong Kong, Dr. Fu completed his medical studies in the University of Pittsburgh in 1977, and carved out a stellar career. His appointments include Distinguished Service Professor by the University of Pittsburgh, presidency of the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM) for a one-year term, and president of the International Society of Arthroscopy, Knee Surgery and Orthopaedic Sports Medicine for a two-year term in 2009.

The world of Orthopaedic Sports Medicine would have been different without Dr. Fu. With a pioneering and collaborative spirit, Dr. Fu belonged to the generation of innovators and thinkers, challenging norms in practice, opening new horizons in science, and innovating concepts which transform practices and revolutionize surgical techniques.

In particular for anatomic anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction. In recognition of his pioneering work, the UPMC Sports Medicine Centre was re-opened in 2018 as the UPMC Freddie Fu Sports Medicine Centre. Dr. Fu had over the years nurtured many state-of-the-art laboratories, pushing boundaries of biomechanics and the movement sciences in collaboration with many world-renowned researchers. He was primarily responsible for the conception and oversight of the design and construction of the \$80 million UPMC Rooney Sports Complex, a 60-acre, state-of-the-art sports medicine complex that opened in October 2000. An award winning researcher, he had co-authored 173 book chapters, written over 675 peer-reviewed articles and edited 30 major orthopaedic textbooks. He had an impressive h-index of 100, with nearly 36,000 citations.







citations and had spurred numerous fellows to become established clinician-scientists who lead competitive academic research programs in the Asia-Pacific region.

Beyond these prolific achievements, Dr. Fu had always been everything to all who knew him as a mentor and a friend. As teacher and mentor, he trained generations of fellows and orthopaedic surgeons all over Asia who are now renowned experts in their own rights. He was no stranger to us as plenary speaker and expert faculty in numerous APOA and national Orthopaedic annual scientific meetings, most recently at the Asia-Pacific Knee, Arthroscopy and Sports Medicine Summit in 2019.



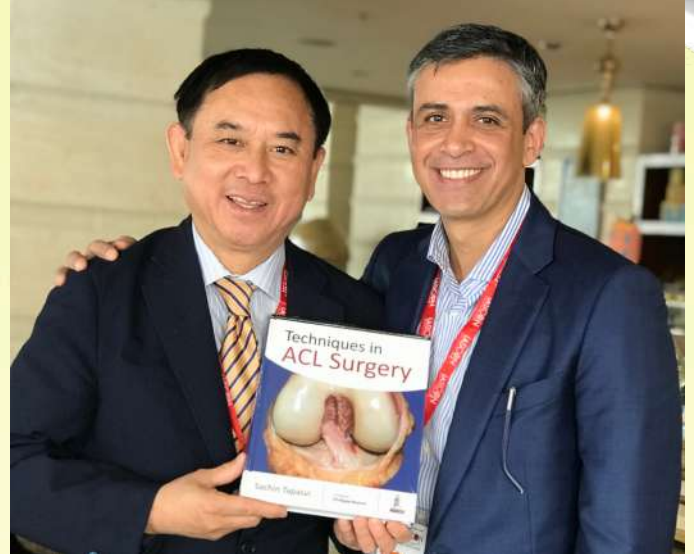
He had been conferred prestigious honorary professorships such as the first Lifetime Honorary Professor of the Peking University, and served as visiting expert to hospitals all over Asia, including Singapore, through the years. All his live surgical demonstrations always bring back memories of fun, camaraderie and gusto. A keen teacher and observer, he always imparted his knowledge with great enthusiasm. .



Dr. Fu or “Freddie” as the world knew him was a person who was very humble despite his great achievements. His motto in life was to share what he knew and collaborate with different researchers, surgeons, and students. How many orthopaedic surgeons would have thought of collaborating with veterinarians and studying ACL structure in different animals? His love for teaching took him to several countries across the globe. He had visited colleagues in India on several occasions. I remember more than one occasions when he sat down with pen and paper and drew diagrams to explain ACL anatomy to groups of keen surgeons.

The discussions went on to such lengths that we remember having to pull him out of the same so that he would not miss dinner! He inspired undergraduates and postgraduates and senior surgeons alike. His speech at the White Coat Ceremony at Pittsburgh University was a testament to the same. Freddie would take extra effort to maintain a good rapport with all. Write him an email and zip within a few minutes would come back a reply.

Dr. Fu's generosity and hospitality knew no bounds. He was an ardent supporter of the arts and various cultural groups including the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. For fellows and visitors, he took great effort and pride in showcasing UPMC's world-class facilities and programs, while making sure we are immersed in the cultural and culinary scene the city had grown to excel in. Hailing from Hong Kong and with his wife Hilda's roots from Penang, his appreciation of local food and culture was enjoyed by all who hosted him at local events;



he was essentially our “homecoming” expert, a perfect blend of East and West.

Dr. Fu you will always be remembered by us as a great teacher, a great thinker, a great researcher, but above all, a great and kind human being.

We will miss you, Freddie, a giant on whose shoulders we have rested for a panoramic view of Sports Medicine. That familiar smile, pats on the shoulder, insightful advice and awe inspiring words will forever be etched in the memories of the many you have touched in the Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association.

So long dear friend.

**Joyce Koh Suang Bee**

Chair

Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Research Society

**Sachin Tapasvi**

Chair

APOA - Sports Section

Connecting the APOA Family

# Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society

## An Overview



Bangladesh appeared on the world map as an independent country in 1971 after a nine-month war of liberation in which nearly three million people died and thousands of people were war wounded. As the country proudly celebrating her 50 years of independence this year in 2021, the economy is blooming and the process of urbanization is at its highest pace. As the country is approaching the level of middle income nation, growing developmental activities is eye catching. The incidence of frequent accidents and casualties is becoming an inevitable consequence. Thus the importance of Orthopedic surgery as a subject needs faster development than ever before.

Before the independence of Bangladesh Orthopaedic & Trauma care were provided by the General Surgeons initially by Late Prof. Mohammed Asir Uddin, FRCS, Prof. K. S. Alam, FRCS, Prof. Ellinson, FRCS, Prof. Novak, FRCS, Prof. Tera Shankar, FRCS & others. The maiden orthopedic unit in the country was established by Prof. Omar Ahmed Jamal, FRCS in 1965 and he left the country prior to liberation war and the unit was taken over by Prof. S. Islam, FRCS in early 1972. Prof. K.M. Sirajul Islam, FRCS & Prof. Nurul Afsar, FRCS established Orthopedic Departments in Dhaka, Chittagong & Rajshahi Medical College respectably. Later Prof. Prof. Moazzem Hossain, FCPS, took over the charge of Chittagong unit.

When we think about Orthopedics in Bangladesh, two legendary name come up in front, the Father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman and Dr. R. J. Garst (1918 -2009), an American Missionary doctor specialized in Orthopedic Surgery. Since 1953 he was working in Ludhiana, Punjab, India and built the Orthopedic Department along with the establishment of a Christian Medical College.

He came to Bangladesh after Liberation war in 1971, by the request of Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman for the treatment and rehabilitation of large number of War wounded freedom fighters. A orthopedic unit of 100 bed and limb center was built in 2nd and 3rd floor Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital (former Sher e Bangla nagar Hospital) by Dr. R.J. Garst in association with Government of Bangladesh. The hospital was initially known as "Muktibhani Hospital" and afterwards it was called "Pangu Hospital" (RIHD). This is now a 1000 bedded Orthopedic hospital named "NITOR". Bangabandhu by his personal endeavor sent a complete orthopaedic team to GDR (the then East Germany) for two years, along with many injured freedom fighters for treatment in a special flight in early May 1972.

In 1973, Miss G. Maddison from Denmark and Sister Theodora of India started nursing service under their guidance and continued

their service till their last breath without taking a single penny for their service. They also trained the local nurses for the future need.

The scenario of Orthopaedic & Traumatology in this country started changing with the development of a 400 bed Orthopedic hospital named RIHD (Rehabilitation Institute and Hospital for the Disabled) in 28th April 1974. The journey began with treatment of the war victims initially and after 8 months the hospital opened up for the general people of the newly independent country. After hard work for ten years he built up the Institute & started training & teaching program for Doctors, Nurses, Physio & Occupational therapist, Artificial limb makers and technicians for prosthetic and orthotics. Also set up courses under Dhaka University & Nursing Council. In 1976 nine doctors achieved MS (Masters in Orthopedic surgery) and 4 Diploma in Ortho (D Ortho). Besides this, 12 physiotherapist & Occupational therapist received BSc degree. 12 nurses completed orthopedic training and 26 person completed their training on making Artificial Limb.

From a humble start with only 4-6 people in each Department the number have gone up to about 2000 orthopaedic surgeons and the other branches sufficient enough to provide manpower in different institution in Bangladesh. This is a story of success, a story of service of Dr. Ronald Joseph Garst along with a group of dedicated Doctors who gathered around him.

The center has developed under his leadership and with the support of Bangladesh

Government, ODM (UK), OO (USA), Australia, India, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong & Number of missionary organizations and NGOs. Approximately 200 overseas specialist in various subjects imparted training and teaching in running the different courses. The standard is said to be comparable to a developed country and the institute is considered to be the biggest one of its nature in South East Asia.

Worth mentioning the names of some of the world renowned orthopaedic surgeons who came many times to Bangladesh – Late Mr. Arthur Eyere-Book, Mr. J.N. Wilson, Mr. Geoffry Walker, Dr. Bagby and many others.

On 29th August, 1979 Bangladesh Orthopedic Society (BOS) was formed by the renowned and learned orthopedic surgeons of that time with an aim to foster the quality as well as dissemination of service all over the country. Prof. Dr. Salek Talukdar was the first President of Society. Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society is a proud member of OASAC, the federation member of APOA, Associate member of EFORT. We are also partner of ASAMI along with ASAMI Bangladesh Chapter, Eurasian Orthopaedic Forum (EOF), Association of Traumatologists and Orthopaedists of Russia (ATOR), Jaipur Foot of India. Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society has joint collaboration with AO Alliance Foundation, West Bengal Orthopaedic Association (WBOA), SIGN Fracture Care International, USA and Supporting organization for Spine World Summit in Hong Kong and The Annual World Congress of Orthopaedics (WCORT).

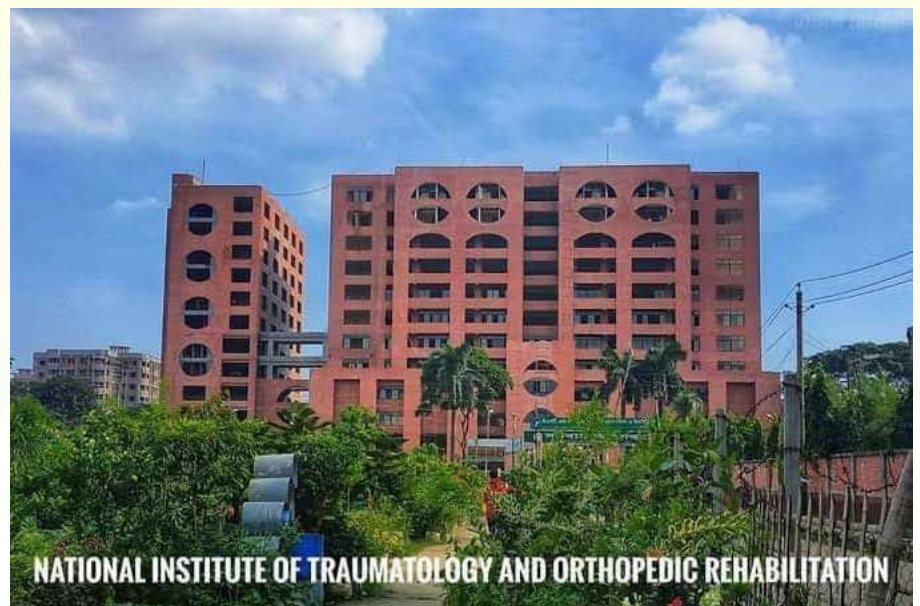
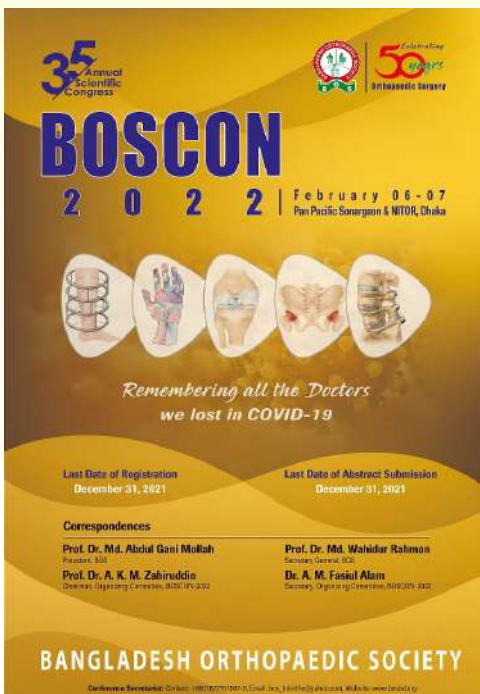
Orthopedic surgery in Bangladesh developed exponentially not only by making young and fresh Orthopedic surgeons every year but also providing skill upgrading through training in home and abroad. From a tertiary level hospital to every district and upzilla, there is a post for an Orthopedic surgeon who have completed their post-graduation. A total number of 362 post are created by the help of current government where BOS and the current President Prof. Dr. Md. Abdul Gani Mollah played a vital role. It is to be mentioned that NITOR here act as an Apex Institute in case of providing trauma service round the clock, 365 days a year along with its 12 sub-specialty service like Arthroplasty, Arthroscopy, Hand & Micro Surgery, Reconstruction & Deformity unit, Paediatric unit, Musculoskeletal Tumor unit, Spine and Trauma unit.

Many Institutions in Bangladesh e.g. NITOR, Dhaka Medical College, BSMMU are training hub for many foreign Orthopedic surgeons.

Still lots of works need to be done and many more dreams need come true. We believe that under the dynamic leadership of Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society (BOS) and others Seniors teachers and mentors, those task that are leftover will be achieved in near future.

**Dr. Wahidur Rehman**  
Secretary General - BOS

**Dr. Maftun Ahmed**  
NITOR, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Research to Create New Knowledge



## Nurturing Research

Joyce Koh Suang Bee



The growth in membership and sub-specialization in the Asia-Pacific Orthopaedic Association (APOA) over the years brings with it new challenges and needs. The Asia-Pacific Orthopaedic Research Section (APORS) was established in 2017 to realize our growing basic and translational research needs.

### Academic activities

APORS, in its commitment to promoting basic and translational research, partnered national organizations such as the NOCERAL in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, to conduct various programs such as the yearly post-graduate symposiums from 2017 to 2020 and the Osteoarthritis Symposium in August 2020.

In 2018, APORS members, including Tunku Kamarul, Howe Tet Sen, and Tan Sik Loo contributed to the scientific contents of the Malaysian Orthopaedic Association Annual Scientific Meeting, which took place in May 2018 in Penang and conducted a Research Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting.

The APORS had its inaugural scientific meeting in partnership with the APOA Sports Section in Kuala Lumpur from 3 to 6 April 2019, bringing together orthopaedic researchers and scientists to present basic research on an array of topics from stem cells, biomechanics to novel emerging technologies.

In partnership with the ASEAN Orthopaedic Research Society, a combined scientific meeting was held at the Combined Indonesian Orthopaedic Association/ASEAN Orthopaedic Association Scientific Meeting 2019 in Jakarta. The head of the research section of the IOA, Prof. Dr. Ismail oversaw the program for research. A prize of USD 500 was awarded to the winner of the best research presentation, Dr. Krishnamurithy Genesan of Malaysia.

The APORS contributed to the scientific program of APOA 2021 held virtually from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, under the Orthopaedic Research Sections I and II, with updates on state-of-the-art basic research and perspectives of surgeon-researchers. The discussions were appreciated across the Asia Pacific region.



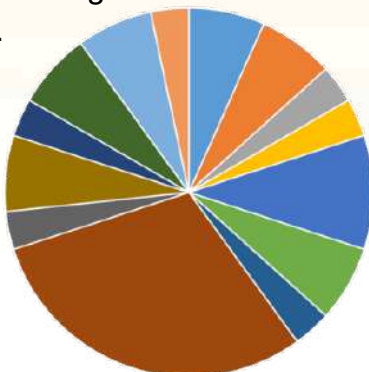
Combined meeting with NOCERAL December 2017



Prof. Sivananthan and Prof. Lee Eng Hin conferred the FIOR award in Montreal, Canada, June 2019

### Partner Organizations and International Collaborations

The APORS is recognized as the Asia-Pacific Orthopaedic Research Society under the umbrella of the International Combined Orthopaedic Research Societies (ICORS). Our members actively participated at the ICORS triennial meeting held from June 19-22, 2019, in Montreal, Canada. During this occasion, two senior honorary members, Prof. Sivananthan of Ipoh Malaysia and Prof. Lee Eng Hin of Singapore were present to be conferred the Fellows of International Orthopaedic Research (FIOR) award in recognition of their dedication and outstanding contributions to Orthopaedic research.



Australia Bangladesh China Hong Kong India Indonesia Korea Malaysia Myanmar Pakistan Philippines Singapore Taiwan Thailand

Our society was featured in the ICORS newsletter in December 2020. The APORS also had representative poster presentations at the ICORS subsection of the Orthopaedic Research Societies Annual Meeting, the USA in the following years :

- 2018: Suraya Zainal Abidin
- 2019: Tunku Kamarul Zaman
- 2020: Krishnamurthy Genesan

### Membership

To date, we have 30 active members from 14 countries. They comprise Orthopaedic surgeons active in musculoskeletal research, scientists, engineers, and other researchers, and we are continually working together to create awareness and expand our membership base.

### Virtual resources during Covid-19

During recent disruptions to continued medical education wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic, the APORS has partnered with the ASEAN Orthopaedic Research Society (AORS) to support research education among Orthopaedic residents by conducting a series of virtual lectures on pertinent topics, such as scientific writing, research methodologies, ethics in research and statistics.

## ICORS 2022

Several APORS members have volunteered to be part of the scientific committee of ICORS 2022 as abstract reviewers. ICORS 2022 is scheduled to be held in Edinburgh, the United Kingdom, from 7-10 September 2022. A workshop proposal titled "Cartilage Regeneration: Concepts and Techniques of improving Chondrogenesis" has also been submitted on behalf of our society.

The website for ICORS 2022 can be accessed at: <https://www.2022icors.org/>.

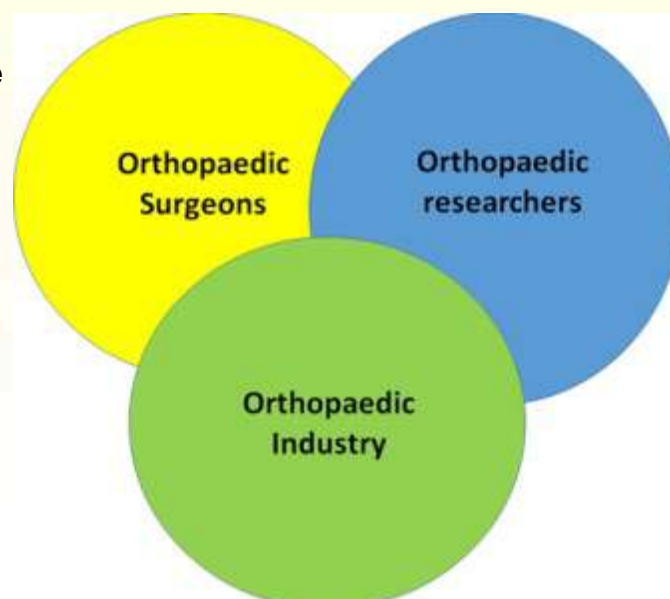
## Our vision

It is our vision that the APORS will continue its mission to grow basic and translational research activities, complementing clinical sub-specialization, which is already well established in the Asia-Pacific region. By partnering clinical sections of the APOA and national research institutions, we hope to spur further collaborative efforts in the region.

Through regular academic exchanges with scientists, engineers, and other musculoskeletal researchers, our Orthopaedic community will continue to keep abreast and grow their practice in line with recent developments in stem cell applications, robotic technology, 3-D printing, and finite element modeling, novel technologies, artificial intelligence, and big data applications among others.

We envisage a platform for partnership between Orthopaedic surgeons, Orthopaedic researchers, and the Orthopaedic Industry, the major stakeholders, to drive evidence-based practices in Orthopaedic surgery. This scientific community can then provide a unified approach to guide strategic policies in musculoskeletal practices, to improve the care of generations to come.

**Joyce Koh Suang Bee**  
Chair - APORS  
Singapore





Expand Your Mind; Change Your World



## # APOA YSF ChatBox

So Kato



I had the privilege to be elected as the chairperson of APOA Young Surgeon's Forum (YSF) for the term 2021-2022. Upon the inauguration of the term, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as well as YSF to the APOA members.

My name is So Kato, and I am one of the staff spine surgeons and an assistant professor at the University of Tokyo. My subspecialty is spinal deformity, but I also spend a lot of time dealing with degenerative disorders including cervical myelopathy as well as increasing cases of spinal metastasis.

I graduated from University of Tokyo, Japan in 2007, and started its' orthopaedic training program thereafter. As a junior intern, I was interested in neurology as well as musculoskeletal science thus making spine surgery a perfect match for me.

Unfortunately as an enthusiastic young



Fig. 1 Anterior-posterior instrumented fusion for kyphotic deformity with osteoporotic vertebral fracture

first-year orthopaedic resident, I was initially disappointed because during spine surgeries, I couldn't see a thing while the Attending Surgeons perform single-level procedures. I think young surgeons' voices are important in providing feedback and suggestions on how to improve the surgical learning experience as there are gaps between what trainees expect and what trainers could provide.

The encounter with scoliosis surgery during my residency changed my life. It had everything I wanted: neurology, instrumentation and biomechanics. After obtaining my orthopaedic board-certification, I decided to pursue my passion in spinal deformity surgery; and moved to Canada to complete pediatric and adult spinal deformity fellowships at the University of Toronto, Canada with my mentor, Professor Stephen Lewis. Subsequently I returned to Japan and re-joined the University of Tokyo in 2017.

During my off-time, playing the electric guitar and practicing Kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) have been my two major hobbies, but since the pandemic started, I had to shift to indoor activities such as swimming and catching up on movies.

As an academic surgeon affiliated with the university, education is one of the important pillars of my commitments. I feel that the



Weekend Kendo practice

education and training of young surgeons are challenged in many ways especially in this time of the Covid19 pandemic where there is a significant drawback on hands-on learning experiences i.e. cadaver training courses and workshops. However, there is the positive side with international learning opportunities becoming more accessible than ever with the increased numbers of online quality materials including webinars and online conferences with recorded contents made accessible for different time zones.

This is perfect at this time where electronic gadgets are also at its most mobile with our generation. This is therefore the right time for us young surgeons to gather virtually to discuss, share and exchange training and learning experiences. All the YSF members including myself, are very excited to take the lead in that aspect.

YSF is a group of orthopaedic surgeons that is considered young in the history of the APOA community; YSF has been defined in the

APOA constitution as the link between the esteemed Council with all the young orthopaedic surgeons across Asia Pacific.

Currently, there are only 18 YSF representatives and we highly encourage young colleagues to reach out to us via your country representative and voice out any issues related to education and training as well as suggestions or ideas for better learning and research collaboration opportunities. Our goal is to function as an advocate for you, young surgeons and initiate changes at the community, regional, and global levels.

These are indeed challenging times for career and training advancement with physical borders lockdowns and limited physical meetings. There is a famous Japanese saying which means “adversity strengthens the foundation”. Despite these challenges I believe that we can make use of the virtual opportunities to learn from the experts be it webinars, or online lectures. It is an added benefit to be able to ask a question to the international experts in the virtual Q&A section and have it answered live.

As the YSF chairperson, I look forward to hearing from you and I welcome all young orthopaedic surgeons to contribute your thoughts and ideas for a better learning, training and research opportunity. *(So Kato / Maria S)*

**So Kato**  
Chair APOA Young Surgeons' Forum  
Japan



**APOA** Asia Pacific  
Orthopaedic Association

# CONNECTION e-Newsletter



Unit 1.6, Level 1, Technology Park Malaysia  
Lebuhraya Puchong – Sungei Besi, Bukit Jalil  
57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

[admin@apoaonline.com](mailto:admin@apoaonline.com)

