

WMG *Continued*

Reflections from a ViOptix Travel Fellowship Winner

I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to the Women's Microsurgery Group and ViOptix for the 2017 Travel Scholarship to attend the American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery Annual Meeting in Waikoloa Village, Hawaii. I was very humbled and honored to learn that I had been selected as the resident recipient of this scholarship. As a fourth year resident in the integrated plastic surgery residency at Albany Medical Center in Albany, NY, I stepped onto the plane dressed in heavy winter clothes and still thinking about the snowblower injuries, skiing accidents, and other consults I had seen on call the night before. This all quickly faded from my mind as I stepped out into the perpetual summertime weather on the Big Island. Throughout the conference, I truly felt the welcoming "Aloha" spirit for which Hawaii is infamous.

I am very grateful to my mentors, particularly Dr. Kristen Rezak, Director of the Albany Medical Center Microsurgery Fellowship, for encouraging me to apply for this scholarship, and to Dr. Joan Lipa, WMG Committee Chairperson, for her warm welcome on the first morning of my stay and for providing many introductions throughout the meeting. I was inspired to meet other microsurgeons, including current fellows and fellowship program directors, and grateful for their advice for my upcoming microsurgery fellowship applications. Attending the social aspects of the meeting provided invaluable networking opportunities. The WMG Lunch Session on Conflict Resolution and the WMG Reception provided particular insight on how such relationships would be useful in the future, as I watched established microsurgeons share information and provide career advice for professional development.

Journalist and former CNN anchor Miles O'Brien gave the Joint Presidential Keynote Lecture on the



Paschalia Mountziaris, MD, PhD, with ASRM President Charles Butler, MD

first day. It was a truly dynamic talk on his unique perspective as both a science journalist and an amputee; he developed acute compartment syndrome while on assignment and required a mid-humeral amputation. He provided valuable insight into the challenges faced by upper extremity amputees and the ways in which medicine, surgery, and technology can help. I really enjoyed the Young Microsurgeons Group Forum: "On the Hot Seat: How Would You Handle This Complication?" In addition to panel discussion, audience participation was included through cell-phone based voting on a variety of topics, e.g. the best flap or next step in the case, the best recipient vessel for the flap given complications so far, etc. It was intriguing to see the real-time thought processes of various microsurgeons in the room. During the ASRM William A. Zamboni Visiting Professors Presentation, Dr. Jamie Levine mentioned his trip to visit us at Albany Medical Center, and its special meaning since that is where he went to medical school.

I attended a variety of fascinating and diverse sessions and left the Annual Meeting with renewed excitement for complex reconstruction. During a panel discussion on "Alternative Perforator Flaps for Microsurgical Breast Reconstruction," Dr. Robert Allen showed a photo of himself and his microsurgical fellow immediately after the first DIEP flap. It was amazing to hear him reflect on such an important development in microsurgery. The scientific presentations and discussions of emerging methods

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TRAVEL FELLOWSHIP REFLECTIONS *Continued*

in the field provided experience in reconstructive techniques and strategies that will be critical for my future career in complex microsurgical reconstruction. I was particularly excited to learn more about the recently described lateral thigh perforator (LTP) flap, and to listen to Dr. Stefania Tuinder's panel presentation on the design of innervated LTP flaps.

The Best Case presentations were a highlight of the meeting, each one more amazing than the next. Dr. Justin Sacks described a pedicled incontinuity femur-fibula construct for ventral spine reconstruction. Dr. Jesse Selber described simultaneous transplantation of scalp and calvarial bone, as well as kidney and pancreas; the plan was almost foiled by the donor's self-inflicted gunshot wound through the temple. As amazing as these presentations were, the best was yet to come. Dr. Adam Maciejewski presented the case of a 37 year-old head and neck cancer survivor, who had undergone renal transplant in 2001 for end-stage renal disease, then developed cancer and underwent total laryngectomy in 2009. Years later, with his cancer in remission, he presented to Dr. Maciejewski for reconstruction, and eventually underwent simultaneous transplantation of the neck skin, strap muscles, larynx/trachea/pharynx, and thyroid/parathyroids. Post-operatively, the patient had normal thyroid function and regained vocal

cord function. Most impressive of all, the patient, a native Polish speaker, learned English to tell the ASRM audience the huge impact that this reconstruction had on his quality of life. This really spoke to me, as I find this psychological impact of microsurgical reconstruction to be a very rewarding and worthy cause.

Attending the 2017 ASRM Annual Meeting proved to be a truly inspirational and valuable opportunity. I am thankful for the welcoming hospitality of Dr. Lipa and all the members of the Women's Microsurgery



Above: Lina with Dr. Joan Lipa. At right: Lina with Dr. Kristen Rezak, Dr. Siba Haykal... and a dolphin!



Group, as well as for the generosity of the WMG and ViOptix in funding my trip. I look forward to an academic career combining my interests in tissue regeneration and microsurgical reconstruction, and I am very appreciative of the valuable educational and networking opportunities that I gained by attending the Annual Meeting. Thank you again!

Sincerely,
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