Taiwanese urologists gain fresh insights on European urology

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Thanks to the European Association of Urology (EAU) and Taiwan Urology Association, we had the chance to join the 20th European academic trip. It was one of the most memorable professional experiences we ever had, and we were impressed by the warm welcome from the EAU organisers and our friends in Germany and Sweden, especially Prof. Gra even and Bjartell.

Marlinski Klinik
After a 24-hour journey, we finally arrived in Hamburg where Prof. Tiki and her staff welcomed us at the Marlinski Klinik. The Marlinski Klinik is the biggest prostate cancer center in Europe, and the number of radical prostatectomy performed in a year is more than the total cases at Mayo Clinic in Cleveland, Clinic in United States. There are four Da Vinci robotic systems and it prostate cancer specialists in the hospital. Each physician has his own field of expertise. At the Marlinski Klinik we learned about MRI fusion-guided prostate biopsy, with techniques that have not yet been developed in Taiwan. We also observed the robotic RRP performed by Prof. Graeven. The surgical techniques we saw were impressive, particularly the whole-mount frozen section technique. We learned that real-time whole-gland frozen section is a very effective method to ensure either the surgical margin or neurovascular bundle preservation, as well as the pre-docking sexual wound for intra-operative retrieval of the prostate gland. The real-time whole-gland frozen section requires close cooperation of the pathologist and the urologist. We also learned new insights on aging prostate and urological urothelial preservation.

Marlinski Klinik operates a centralised family clinic and efforts to improve clinical outcomes are some of the reasons why this institute has earned a solid reputation. The comprehensive environment is liberal and the doctors impressed us with their competence and dedication. We thank Profs. Graeven and Tiki and the fellows in Marlinski Klinik, Susan, Raaja, and Laurel, for their hospitality.

Aside from introducing us to Hamburg, Prof. Tiki and Prof. Graeven also planned a sightseeing tour on the second day which showed us German hospitality and prepared us for the rest of the academic tour.

We then took a train to Rubeck University and visited Prof. Menhert. He took us to the wards, clinics and laboratories, and briefed us on their management system.

Off to Sweden
After a three-day stay in Germany, we left for Denmark where we took a bus to Malmö. In Sweden, Prof. Bjartell arranged an intensive course for us. This not only gave us an in-depth overview of the work being done in Lund University, but also gave us a glimpse into the university’s basic research activities, which inspired me to think about future prospects in urology.

At Lund University, we joined the daily morning meetings of the Urology Department and experienced the Swedish practical approach. Government policies require that certain diseases can only be treated in specific centers. This makes the Lund University Hospital very special in rare areas, such as prostate, bladder, and urology cancers. Prof. Bjartell also introduced us to the very impressive basic research facilities in prostate cancer, which combine both clinical and translational aspects. Using unique facilities such as specialist animal imaging and bone scan, they can do more studies on either functional or anatomical models.

Prof. Bjartell’s modesty even though he is a great scholar and doctor and despite all his outstanding achievements, makes him a role model. A cardiologist professor also briefed us on the medical history of Sweden, which was very informative and enlightening.

Annual EAU Congress
It was also our first time to participate in the five-day Annual EAU Congress in Copenhagen, an impressive event that offered so much new information, ranging from clinical and basic research, novel surgical advances, summary and comparison of new trials, developments in technical equipment, among many others. In the live surgeries we witnessed excellent surgical skills.

There were also many Taiwanese urologists attending the EAU Congress. It seems the EAU has a more international tradition and communication style among the urological associations.

We were honored to be invited to the Friendship Dinner where we again met Profs. Bjartell, Tiki, and our co-exchange fellows from Japan. It was an inspiring evening where we experienced the dynamics of the social community. The sense of community has certainly inspired us to work harder.

Certainly, the EAU Congress in Copenhagen was a wonderful five-day event marked by knowledge exchanges and memorable friendship. This European journey will remain a memorable experience that we will always cherish. For this amazing experience, our sincere thanks to the EAU.

We also wish to express our appreciation to Prof. Chapple. He even came to Taiwan to give a lecture on the highlights of EAU after the annual conference! Finally, we would like to thank the coordinator at the EAU Office, Ms. Terberg, who arranged such a great tour for us. This trip really broadened our horizons and enriched our minds. This was an unforgettable journey, and we got a lot of inspiration from all the people we have met. Thank you very much!