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# THE ORTHOPAEDIC FORUM

## The 2015 AOA North American Traveling Fellowship

Addisu Mesfin, MD, Xinning Li, MD, Jonathan F. Dickens, MD, Bashar Alolabi, MD, MSC, and Anna N. Miller, MD

The North American Traveling Fellowship (NATF) is one of the flagship tours of the American Orthopaedic Association (AOA). NATF is geared toward advancing the careers of young orthopaedic surgeons through the promotion of clinical, scientific, and social exchange. The 2015 tour had a major emphasis on the development of leadership in the field of orthopaedics through close interactions and meetings with departmental chairs and administrators, as well as with hospital and medical school leaders. The 2015 NATF tour was in the Midwest corridor of Canada and the United States. The 5 fellows included specialists in spine, trauma, sports medicine, and shoulder and elbow surgery. Lifelong friendships and collaborations were formed during the tour. We visited 14 centers, and each site/host made great efforts to make us feel welcome and also organized excellent academic and social programs. By the conclusion of the tour, it was clear to all of us that this was a once in a lifetime experience, and we were honored to have the privilege of participating in such an amazing opportunity. The exposure to high-caliber leaders in our profession allowed us to appreciate different ways of balancing the intricacies of academic and clinical life, and these lessons will remain with us throughout our careers.

The John J. Fahey, MD, Memorial North American Traveling Fellowship (NATF) was started 45 years ago and is one of the flagship tours of the American Orthopaedic Association (AOA). The fellowship is geared toward early-career academic orthopaedic surgeons. The tour promotes clinical, scientific, and social exchanges, and is held in odd-numbered years in Canada and the United States. The fellowship lasts 4 to 5 weeks and is composed of 5 traveling fellows (one from Canada and 4 from the United States). In addition to academics and networking, the focus of the 2015 tour was on leadership.

The 2015 NATF tour was organized by Dr. John S. Kirkpatrick (NATF 1993) with administrative support by Kathy Sinnen. We traveled to 14 sites in the Midwestern corridor of Canada and the United States. The tour kicked off in London, Ontario, where we met as a group for the first time in our hotel

lobby; we were all enthusiastic about getting to know each other and to participate in the provided opportunities.

Addisu Mesfin is an Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. He also serves as the Louis A. Goldstein Spine Surgery Fellowship Director. Dr. Mesfin completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Maryland and his medical education at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He completed his residency at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, followed by an adult and pediatric spine surgery fellowship at Washington University in St. Louis. He has a focus on spine oncology and also manages complex spine trauma/spinal cord injury, deformity, and degenerative spinal conditions.

Xinning “Tiger” Li is an Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Boston University School of Medicine

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and Boston Medical Center. He received his undergraduate degree from Campbell University in North Carolina and his medical degree from the University of Virginia. Dr. Li completed his residency at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He completed a fellowship in sports medicine and shoulder surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, followed by a second fellowship at Harvard Medical School in shoulder and elbow surgery. His practice is focused on complex shoulder and knee reconstruction and sports medicine. Additionally, Tiger is the team physician for Boston University Athletics.

Jonathan F. Dickens (Jon) is an Assistant Professor of Surgery at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and Associate Director of Research in the Department of Orthopaedics at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. MAJ Dickens received his undergraduate degree from Davidson College in North Carolina. He completed medical school at Indiana University, followed by residency training at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. He completed a sports medicine fellowship at the John A. Feagin Jr. Sports Medicine Fellowship Program at West Point.

Bashar Alolabi, the Canadian Orthopaedic Association (COA) representative, practices at Hamilton General Hospital in Hamilton, Ontario. Dr. Alolabi obtained his medical education at McMaster University and completed his residency and graduate degree at Western University in London, Ontario. He pursued fellowship training in shoulder and elbow surgery at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, followed by a fellowship in trauma and lower extremity reconstruction/arthroplasty at the University of Toronto. His practice encompasses complex orthopaedic trauma and shoulder and elbow surgery.

Anna N. Miller is an Associate Professor at Washington University in St. Louis. Dr. Miller completed her medical education at Baylor University in Texas and her residency at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. She completed an orthopaedic trauma fellowship at the Harborview Medical

Center, University of Washington. Her practice includes complex orthopaedic trauma, and her research interests include bone healing and secondary osteoporotic fracture prevention.

### Western University, London, Ontario

We started our tour in London, Ontario, with a relaxed dinner at the Abruzzi Restaurant with faculty members from Western University, including Drs. Athwal, MacDonald, Faber, King, and MacLeod. The following morning, we presented our talks at a well-attended academic session at St. Joseph's Hospital. Thereafter, Jon observed Dr. Getgood, Tiger observed Dr. Faber, and Bashar observed Dr. King in clinic. At Victoria Hospital, Addisu spent time with Dr. Bailey and observed Dr. Rasoulinejad in the operating room, and Anna observed Dr. Lawendy in the operating room. That evening, we were treated to a London Knights hockey game against the Windsor Spitfires, both members of the Ontario Hockey League (Fig. 1).

### University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba

The following day, we flew to Winnipeg, Manitoba, and had dinner with the University of Manitoba orthopaedic residents and Drs. MacDonald and Clark. In the morning, we had an academic session at the Pan Am Clinic, with presentations from the NATF fellows and the University of Manitoba faculty. This was followed by a great lunch with Dr. and Mrs. MacDonald. We next toured and reflected on the exhibits and presentations at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which focuses on past and current human rights violations in addition to ongoing work to advance human rights. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people," captures the essence of the museum. The next morning, we had an academic session at the Health Sciences Centre, which was moderated by Dr. Goytan, with presentations by faculty and NATF fellows. We



Fig. 1  
In London, Ontario, at the London Knights hockey game.

then toured the clinical facilities at the Concordia Hip and Knee Institute as well as the impressive arthroplasty retrieval repository and research facilities. We ended the day with a well-attended private dinner with faculty and residents at Hy's Steakhouse.

### University of Nebraska, Omaha

Early the next morning, we departed for Omaha, Nebraska, where we were picked up at the airport by Dr. Scherl from the University of Nebraska. That evening, Dr. Scherl provided a wonderful dinner at his home, where we were joined by Drs. Esposito and Jenson. The following morning, some of the fellows observed cases in the operating room at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, while other fellows observed in the clinic setting. A well-attended academic session led by Dr. Garvin (Chair, Department of Orthopaedics) was held in the afternoon, which began with a talk on principles for emerging leaders by Dr. Liu, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Faculty Development. Presentations were given by University of Nebraska faculty in addition to the NATF fellows. In the evening, we had an excellent dinner and were joined by Drs. Garvin and Scherl and some faculty. In the morning, we visited the nationally renowned Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium, followed by an entertaining visit to Dr. Haider's impressive biomechanics laboratory, which has a primary focus on knee and hip arthroplasty.

### University of Iowa, Iowa City

That afternoon, we flew to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Dr. Hettrich met us at the airport. The following morning, we presented at a large academic session at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. We had a great open discussion on leadership, academics, and historical figures with Dr. Buckwalter (Fig. 2). This was followed by a meeting with the chief operating officer of the hospital, Mr. Singh. We finished off a

great morning with Dr. Marsh, who gave us his perspective and priorities as chairman. The day ended with dinner and great conversations with Drs. Buckwalter and Wolf in the heart of the college town center. Our visit coincided with homecoming weekend for the Iowa Hawkeyes football team, and after tailgating, we toured the Hawkeyes training facility with Dr. Wolf and watched the Hawkeyes beat the Illinois Fighting Illini.

### Northwestern University, Chicago

The next morning, we flew to Chicago and were picked up by Dr. Peabody from Northwestern University. We had lunch with Dr. Peabody near the Chicago Magnificent Mile and discussed his views as chairman on various matters, including compensation plans and residency training. We were picked up early the next morning by Dr. Hsu and given a tour of Northwestern Memorial Hospital; we then spent clinical time with our subspecialty hosts. This was followed by a Korean barbecue lunch and a Segway tour around Lake Michigan with Dr. Hsu (Fig. 3). We had a well-attended academic session in the afternoon with lively discussions. We finished the day with a dinner at a steakhouse with Drs. Peabody, Hsu, Patel, and Kadakia.

### University of Chicago

The following day, Dr. Haydon organized a visit to the Oriental Institute, a museum at the University of Chicago. An academic session followed, with presentations from University of Chicago faculty (Drs. Lee, Martell, Shi, and Koh) and NATF fellows. We finished the day with a dinner at the Quadrangle Club, which was attended by residents and faculty, including Drs. Simon, Luu, Haydon, Shi, Koh, and Athiviraham. We had great discussions, and Dr. Simon shared his experiences as previous orthopaedic chairman and current Dean of Graduate Medical Education.



Fig. 2

At the University of Iowa following a roundtable discussion with Dr. Buckwalter.





Fig. 3

Segway tour along Lake Michigan organized by Dr. Hsu from Northwestern University.

### Loyola University, Chicago

Our third stop in Chicago was Loyola University Medical Center. Our host was Dr. Hopkinson, and we started the day with an academic session that was very well attended. The rest of the morning included a session on physician leadership with the hospital chief executive officer (CEO) and president, as well as with Dr. Ghanayem, the incoming orthopaedic chair. We attended additional sessions on professionalism and running a residency program with the Dean of Graduate Medical Education and Dr. Wu, the orthopaedic residency program director. In the afternoon, we attended an informative tour of Frank Lloyd Wright's first home, which was organized by Dr. Light. We learned that Dr. Light is one of the board members responsible for the preservation and renovation of the Frank Lloyd Wright home in Chicago.

### Rush University Medical Center, Chicago

In the evening, we had dinner with Rush University Medical Center faculty Drs. Nho, An, Gitelis, and Coleman, as well as the residents. Our last academic session in Chicago was the next morning at Rush University Medical Center. Presentations on hospital leadership, training leaders in sports medicine, and running a successful practice were given by Drs. Gitelis, Bach Jr., and Bush-Joseph. Dr. Bach provided us with valuable lessons on how to successfully recruit faculty and discussed his criteria for the sports medicine fellow selection. We then observed surgical cases in our subspecialties, followed by a tour of the medical center.

### University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

We departed Chicago that afternoon and headed to Ann Arbor, Michigan. We had a great dinner and conversations at Dr. and Mrs. Carpenter's house, where we were joined by Drs. Miller, Grant, Hallstrom, and Goulet. The following morning, we

presented our talks to faculty and residents. Dr. Hallstrom updated us on his work and leadership of a statewide arthroplasty registry initiative. Bashar, Tiger, and Jon had an additional academic session with the University of Michigan Sports Medicine fellows and athletic training staff, and they toured the football athletic facilities. Addisu and Anna reviewed cases with Drs. Goulet and Hak. At lunch, we heard additional insights on leadership from Dr. Biermann, orthopaedic oncologist and Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education. We then toured the Ford F-150 assembly line at the Ford Rouge Factory. The following day, we were fortunate to see the arch rivals from the University of Michigan and Michigan State play a football game; unfortunately, the University of Michigan lost in the last spectacular play of the game.

### Washington University in St. Louis

The following morning, we flew to Saint Louis, Missouri, and were met by Drs. O'Keefe and Brophy from Washington University in St. Louis. We had a wonderful dinner at Dr. and Mrs. O'Keefe's home, where we were joined by Drs. Barrack, Boyer, Brophy, Gupta, and Wright (Fig. 4). The following day was dedicated to lessons on leadership from Drs. O'Keefe, Yamaguchi, and Gelberman; we also met with hospital administration. Dr. Wright presented on how to successfully run a residency program and taught us the importance of having "laser focus" in our careers. Mr. Faulbaum (chief financial officer) spoke about the department financial model. Subsequently, we toured the impressive musculoskeletal basic science laboratories with Drs. O'Keefe and Silva. That evening, we had dinner at the St. Louis Club and had a memorable roundtable discussion about our orthopaedic and career mentors. The next morning, we presented at the academic session and then had a tour of the

**TABLE I Bernard Morrey's Faculty-Recruiting Criteria, in Descending Order of Importance**

1. Knowledge of orthopaedics
2. Judgment
3. Execution (surgical skills)
4. Sense of humanity (caring for patients)
5. Energy (strive to excel in clinical, research, and education)
6. Integrity
7. Selflessness
8. Imagination/creativity

St. Louis Rams training facility with Dr. Brophy; we also had a discussion on leadership with the Rams' head coach, Jeff Fisher.

### University of Missouri, Columbia

In the afternoon, we drove to the University of Missouri in Columbia. We had dinner with Dr. Della Rocca and other faculty members (Drs. Crist, Goldstein, Ma, and Smith) at the Wine Cellar & Bistro. Dr. Della Rocca brought 4 bottles of wine from his own personal collection for us to sample. The next morning, our academic session was at the Missouri Orthopaedic Institute with lively discussions. Dr. Choma presented on the impressive expansion of the Missouri Orthopaedic Institute, Dr. Keeney presented on leadership, and Dr. Cook presented on translational animal research in orthopaedics. After a tour of the Missouri Tigers athletic facility and gait laboratory, we went to a wine tasting at Les Bourgeois Winery. In the evening, we had dinner with Dr. Stannard and several faculty members.

### Mayo Clinic, Rochester

Early the next morning, we flew to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. We met Dr. Kakar in the hotel lobby and walked to have dinner with Mayo Clinic faculty. The following day, we met with Dr. Pagnano, who gave us some of his leadership perspectives as chairman. He also gave insightful advice on how to focus one's research career and national reputation. Tiger and Bashar spent the afternoon with Dr. Bernard Morrey and Dr. Mark Morrey in the operating room, observing a complex elbow reconstruction case. This was the very last surgery that Dr. Bernard Morrey performed at Mayo Clinic. After a tour of the Mayo Clinic facilities, we spent additional time with Dr. Bernard Morrey, who imparted on us leadership lessons and described the qualities that he looks for when recruiting faculty members (Table I). In the evening, we went to Minneapolis for a tour of the Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine Center with Drs. Kakar and Rose, and we then watched the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Milwaukee Bucks in a basketball game.

### Campbell Clinic, Memphis

We left Rochester in the morning and headed to the Campbell Clinic in Memphis. After arriving at the Peabody Hotel, we had a meal of Memphis barbecue with Drs. Mihalko and Azar at Charlie Vergos Rendezvous. The following day, we visited the inspiring National Civil Rights Museum at the historic Lorraine Motel, where Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated; we also visited Elvis Presley's Graceland. We had dinner with Dr. Beaty at the Memphis Country Club, and later went to Beale Street to enjoy some outstanding live music. The following day, we toured the Campbell Clinic and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. We also met with Mr. Hernandez, CEO of the Campbell Clinic, who explained the practice plan, as well as with Dr. Canale, who shared some of his wisdom for success in



Fig. 4  
At a dinner hosted by Dr. and Mrs. O'Keefe with faculty, including Drs. Barrack, Boyer, Brophy, Gupta, and Wright.





Fig. 5  
At the challenge course in San Antonio, which was organized by Dr. Stinner from the Brooke Army Medical Center.

orthopaedics. In the evening, we gave presentations along with faculty at an academic session that was well attended by residents and attending physicians.

### Brooke Army Medical Center

The next morning, we flew to our final destination, the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. That evening, we had a journal club with residents and faculty, which was hosted by Drs. Stinner and Dowd. The following morning, we had an academic session with excellent case presentations by the residents. We visited the Center for the Intrepid at Brooke Army Medical Center and learned about the next generation of prostheses as well as physical therapy being used for wounded warriors. Dr. Wenke gave us a tour of the U.S. Army Institute for Surgical Research, followed by a discussion on civilian-military research collaborations and some of the orthopaedic trauma advances from the center. The following morning, we went to the Don Strange Ranch Adventure Challenge Course. We did the challenge course along with wounded warriors, and were impressed and motivated by their resiliency and success on the course (Fig. 5). We were hosted at Dr. and Mrs. Dowd's home for dinner, where we were joined by residents and faculty for a

great evening. Next, we went to the San Antonio River Walk and then headed back to our hotel to pack for our flights home.

### Conclusion

The 2015 NATF brought together 5 strangers from very different backgrounds (Tiger, Addisu, and Bashar are immigrants from China, Ethiopia, and Syria, respectively; Anna is an eighth-generation Texan; and Jonathan comes from a farming family in North Carolina), and longstanding friendships and bonds were formed during the month that we spent together. We had frequent discussions regarding our different academic centers, the challenges that we face, and the opportunities that we have to impact our specialty. We realized that we have similar challenges and have to constantly adapt to change while striving to succeed in clinical practice, in research, and as educators. We learned a great deal from the orthopaedic leaders and faculty that we met along the way. We also had an outstanding cultural experience and the opportunity to visit various medical centers and cities, many of which we had never visited before. We are honored to have followed in the path of the long list of accomplished NATF alumni. Additionally, we are grateful to our families for being understanding about our time away; we also are grateful to our colleagues and our departments for being supportive of this opportunity. Lastly, we are thankful that the AOA and the COA provided this amazing opportunity, and we appreciate Dr. Kirkpatrick's leadership and Ms. Sinnen's administrative support. ■

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