

HKOA Spine Chapter Travelling Scholarship Report

EuroSpine 2013

1 -4 Oct, 2013, Liverpool, UK

As a young fellow, I attended the first international overseas conference in my career. With my great interest in spine surgery, I chose Eurospine as it's one of the largest international spine meeting in the world, and some topics of the symposium were also related to my daily practice.

This year Eurospine was held in Liverpool, England. It is famous of its football team and Beatles, but unfortunately I didn't have time to watch a football match in Liverpool. My hotel was located near the dock area, which is now renovated to a accommodations area consisting of several hotels. I just needed to walk for 5 minutes to the conference venue. And actually the conference venue is also just 15-minute walk from the city centre.

Eurospine 2013 consisted of one pre-day course and a 3-day scientific program. From the statistics provided by conference officials, 65% of participants came from European countries, ratio of Orthopaedic surgeons to Neurosurgeons was 6:4.

On the first day, I joined a pre-day course "Tumour of the Spine", which covered both the primary and metastasis spinal tumour. Speakers came from several major spinal tumour centre in Europe. They may focused on a specific region in the spine with spinal tumour, e.g. Professor Petr Suchomel from Czech is famous of spinal tumour excision and reconstruction of occipital-cervical junction. Other than the most updated surgical management of spinal tumour, I also learnt about the decision algorithm on arriving different management strategies. For example, Spinal Instability Neoplastic Score(SINS) is gaining its attention in recent years for predicting spinal stability and guiding treatment for prophylactic stabilization. With recent advance of cancer treatment, the role of Orthopaedic surgeons is not limited to palliative decompression/ stabilization. Tumour excision by total spondylectomy is also possible, e.g. in RCC or breast cancer, in selected suitable patients. It is very important to me, because recently my hospital has increasing number of spinal metastasis requiring orthopaedics intervention. It may also be true worldwide with aging population and advances of cancer treatment.

On the following 3 days is scientific program, mainly consisted of oral presentations, lunch symposium, invited lectures and debate sessions. Oral presentations included every aspect of spine related clinical and basic science topic. Around 20% of the oral presentations were about basic science, most were concerning disc degenerations and spinal cord tissue regenerations. In general, not many clinical studies consisted a large sample size, even for some common disease/ procedure. But a well designed and organized study were also important to provide a meaningful results.

There was also one oral presentations from Hong Kong by Professor Keith Luk, Mean 34 years follow up of severe angular kyphosis from TB spine: Bad prognosis for paraparesis of late disease. This year EuroSpine did not provide on-site poster presentation, but e-poster presentation. There were many laptop computers in a coffee corner, participants could sit down comfortably and read the e-poster.

There were also presentations or discussion on extremely negative results, such as case series reporting on complications using BMP; High failure rate of inter-spinous spacer(X-STOP) with unacceptable clinical result and revision rate of 32%. While both of the them were products from USA...

One of the most attractive session to me is a lunch symposium concerning degenerative lumbar spinal stenosis, especially focused on patients with degenerative spondylolisthesis. It is more commonly accepted that fusion is needed due to better clinical results, but it became more controversial in recent years. Among the participants, more than half also preferred fusion for degenerative spondylolisthesis. After the symposium and discussion among the guest speakers and audience, there's no consensus (as expected) on whether fusion was necessary nor decompression alone could provide comparable functional results. However there's conclusion that similar improvement in leg symptom can be achieved in both decompression alone or with additional fusion. And decompression only should be posterior element preserving procedure rather than laminectomy. Fusion was also less preferred in elderly patients in view of higher complication rates of fusion surgery. Finally the treatment options should be the best comfortable and familiar techniques of the surgeons.

Another lunch symposium I attended was about the MIS technique in thoraco-lumbar fracture. It emphasize its merit as a "damage control surgery" in multiple trauma patient, short operative time with minimal surgical trauma and providing stability.

However, there's also limitation when the anterior column was too unstable, and the MIS technique shown to be less effective in restoring the lordosis. Most surgeons were very concerned loss of lordosis after removing the implant in future, even most studies show the loss of lordosis were usually within 10 degrees. The importance of endplate integrity was also addressed, as it may theoretically affect the disc integrity, resulting in early disc degenerations and related problems. Hence, a few surgeons were more aggressive on adding ASF in such patients.

Other than the scientific program, I also visited the commercial booth in exhibition area. I'm very surprised that other than the few major orthopaedics instrument companies we usually seen in HK, there're many other companies providing similar products. Most of them were European or American companies, there're also China and Taiwan companies, but not many participants were interested in the Asia-based companies.

After attended my first overseas conference, I will definitely recommend other orthopaedic surgeons to join EuroSpine in the following years, because its high quality presentations and symposium which can provide more updated and advanced information for us.



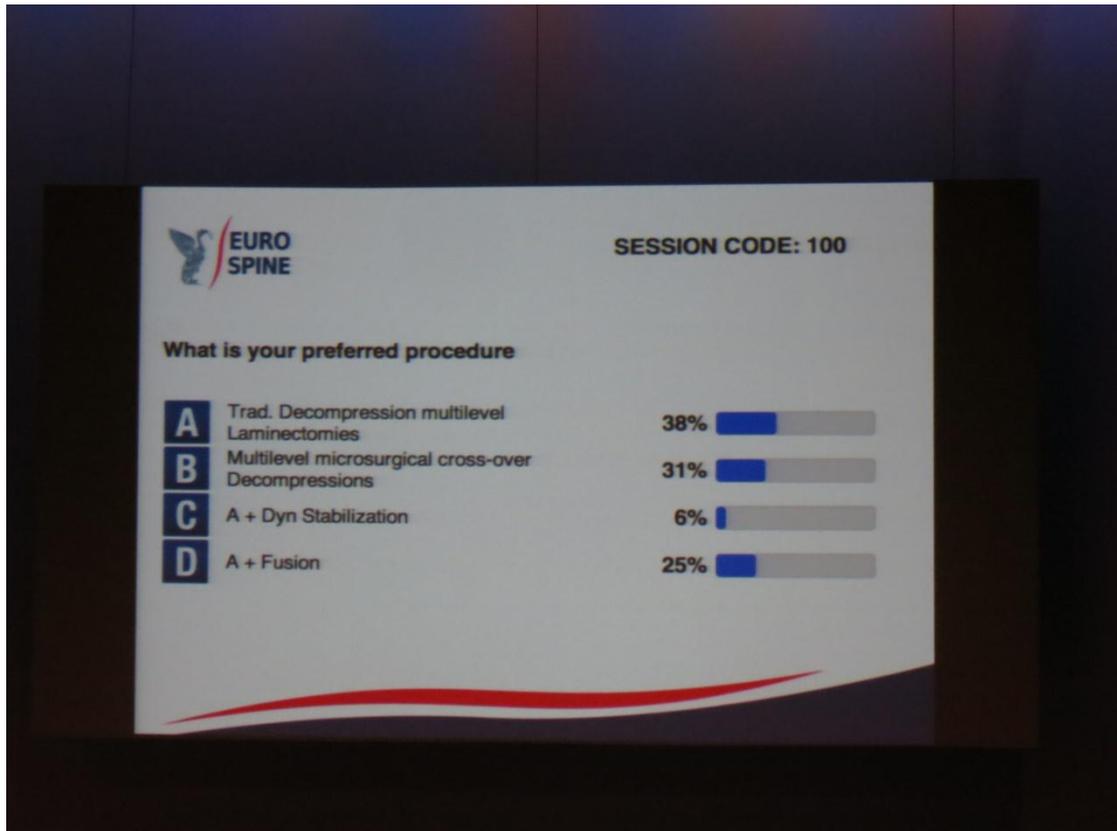
The hotel(left) and conference(right) venue are very closed.



EVONIK is a German chemical company providing various chemical products, PEEK is one of the products.



e-poster area



real time interactive voting system using I-phone Apps, but the response rate was not very good...