

The 2025 IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH Travelling Fellowship Program

The American Association for Hand Surgery (AAHS) was thrilled to serve as a co-host of the IFSSH/IFSHT Triennial Congress held in Washington, DC, USA in March 2025. The Hand Association's most significant contribution to the conference was its facilitation of the IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH Travelling Fellowship program. Through generous funding from the AAHS, ASSH and IFSSH, 24 Travelling Fellowship opportunities were created. Each Fellowship paired an international Fellow with a host centre on the east coast of the United States for a multi-day observership. The Fellows were funded for their travel to the centre and to attend the IFSSH Congress.

The AAHS received 300 applications from across the globe for the Travelling Fellows program! This was an outstanding response and underscores the need for this education and to the interest in hand surgery around the world.

A selection team of 25 AAHS and ASSH members was appointed to review all 300 applications in systematic order evaluating qualifications, clinical, academic, teaching, management and leadership experience, the impact of the Fellowship on the applicant's home country, and the importance of the Fellowship to the

applicant's career. Over several weeks the selection team narrowed the list of finalist candidates to 50 and then ultimately to the 24 Travelling Fellows selected for the program.



The following countries were represented within the 2025 class of IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH Travelling Fellows:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Brazil
- Colombia
- Egypt
- England (UK)
- Ethiopia
- India
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Japan
- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Nigeria
- Philippines
- Poland
- Singapore
- Sri Lanka
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Türkiye
- Uruguay
- Vietnam

Of the 24 Travelling Fellows: 50% were men, 46% were women, and 4% preferred to not provide their gender; 71% were orthopedic surgeons and 29% were plastic surgeons; 79% were from developing countries and 21% were from developed countries.^[1]

Fellows were paired with the following AAHS and ASSH members who arranged for high impact observerships and learning opportunities. Thank you to these outstanding members and their administrative support teams who worked with the Travelling Fellows to ensure logistics for their visits.

- Jim Higgins at Curtis National Hand Center in Baltimore, Maryland, USA
- Dave Ruch at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, USA
- Daniel Osei at Hospital for Specialty Surgery in New York, New York, USA
- Kyle Eberlin at Massachusetts General Hospital/ Harvard Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts, USA
- Mark Rekant at Philadelphia Hand to Shoulder Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

There were 3 Travelling Fellows who were unfortunately unable to travel (there was not sufficient time to identify replacements). All 24 Fellows selected have received a year of free AAHS membership to continue building connection within the hand surgery community and access educational resources.

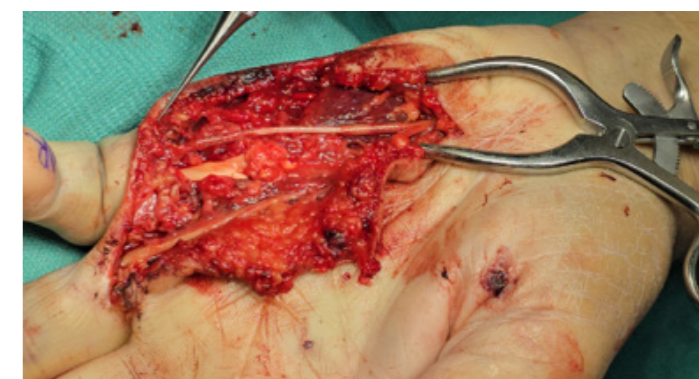
The Travelling Fellows program provides high impact education, educational exchange, network building, and development of friendship and community, and we thank the IFSSH for allowing AAHS and ASSH to be a part of it this year. Positive feedback was received from the Travelling Fellows and host members alike.

Please enjoy the following select reports from the Travelling Fellows themselves. The full reports from all Fellows can be viewed on the [IFSSH website](https://www.ifssh.info).

Dr Krishna Priya Das - Bangladesh
Host Center: Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA

IFSSH fellowship is a prestigious acknowledgement for every young hand surgeon. It is the opportunity to learn by planned educational activities and exchange view with colleagues in the field of hand surgery world-wide.

It was a great pleasure for me, being selected as a 2025 IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH Travelling Fellow. I got a warm reception from the Hand Surgery Division of Duke University. The Out-patient department was well organised and the doctor patient relationship was excellent. I have seen different types of operation related to hand and upper extremities, including fracture, nerve and tendon injury cases, degenerative condition, arthritis (CMC arthritis treated by suspension arthroplasty), total wrist arthroplasty, AVN of scaphoid treated by free vascular femoral condylar autograft and much-more.



Interaction between faculty and fellow was excellent, entertainment was also memorable. Dr. David Ruch was very cordial to us. Academic and training environment was good.

In Washington DC the IFSSH-IFSHT Congress was an amazing experience for me, and to meet 32 IFSSH Pioneers of Hand Surgery at the Opening Ceremony as well as renowned hand surgeons from all over the world. Academically it was great. I have learned a lot of new things from this congress and hope to participate with the next AAHS/ASSH conferences and the triennial IFSSH Congress in Singapore in 2028.

Learning is a on going process. Fellowship training in hand surgery provides specialised expertise in the field. I am really grateful to the IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH-2025 Committee to organise and select me as a Travelling Fellow to experience this mega, memorable event.

Dr Warangkana (Vicky) Fongsri - Thailand
Host Center: Philadelphia Hand to Shoulder Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

I am honored to be one of four travelling fellows selected to visit the Philadelphia Hand to Shoulder Center, sponsored by the IFSSH-IFSHT 2025 Triennial Congress hosts. The fellowship also included attending the IFSSH-IFSHT 2025 Congress in Washington, D.C., from 24-28 March 2025.

I applied with little expectation, knowing the selection was highly competitive. The Fellowship was awarded by a respected international committee, ensuring a fair process. One key criterion was that applicants are teachers—who are excited to learn and educate others –which I believe describes me well. I'm truly grateful to have been selected.

Special thanks to my mentors, Susan Mackinnon, and Sunton Vongsiri, for their invaluable support and recommendation letters.

I spent one week observing at the Philadelphia Hand to Shoulder Center, Thomas Jefferson University. I learned clinical approaches, advanced surgical techniques, and inspiring innovations from outstanding consultants—Drs. Mark Rekant, A. Lee Osterman, and Adam Strohl. I'm excited to pass this knowledge on to my colleagues in Thailand and apply it in my own practice.

I will always remember Dr. Rekant's kindness—he even drove us back after a long surgical day; Dr. Osterman's beloved reputation—I wish him a joyful retirement; and how Dr. Strohl and Dr. Miller reignited my passion for nerve surgery, a field I am truly dedicated to. The kindness and warmth of the nurses and other fellows made this experience truly unforgettable.

I also met three wonderful fellows from Poland, Sri Lanka, and the UK. Together, we shared not only medical knowledge but also culture, family stories, and life goals. I wish them all happiness and success, and I hope our paths cross again soon.

At the opening ceremony in Washington, D.C., I was deeply honored to walk alongside the IFSSH Pioneers of Hand Surgery on stage during their memorable moment. I was especially proud to see two Thai surgeons also recognised with prestigious awards, making the moment even more meaningful for me. It was also a privilege to be recognised as a Travelling Fellow during the closing ceremony.

Throughout the meeting, I learned from inspiring speakers from around the world and explored many fascinating exhibitions.

It was also a wonderful opportunity to meet distinguished figures in the field, reconnect with old friends, and enjoy relaxed moments at the gala and game night.

I want to sincerely thank you again for this opportunity. This Triennial Congress is personally special to me—at the last Congress in London I met someone who is now close to my heart, and this time, I was honored to receive this fellowship in Washington, D.C.

Dr Antonio Kory - Italy
Host Center: Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Participating in the IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH Travelling Fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston was an extraordinary professional and personal experience. MGH, one of the most prestigious hospitals in the United States, offers an environment of clinical excellence, innovation, and collaboration that made every moment of the fellowship incredibly valuable.

Under the guidance of Dr. Kyle Eberlin, the experience was not only academically enriching but also deeply human. Dr. Eberlin stood out as an exceptional leader—highly knowledgeable, approachable, and generous with his time. He was the perfect chief both inside and outside the hospital, ensuring that fellows were welcomed, supported, and fully integrated into the team's activities.

The hand surgery division at MGH, spread across two major hospitals, functions as a cohesive and highly specialised unit. It was inspiring to witness the organisation, efficiency, and team-based approach to patient care. Each morning began with early case discussions and multidisciplinary

meetings, which emphasized the importance of shared decision-making and comprehensive care planning. These sessions were intellectually stimulating and allowed for rich exchanges of ideas, setting the tone for the clinical or surgical activities that followed.

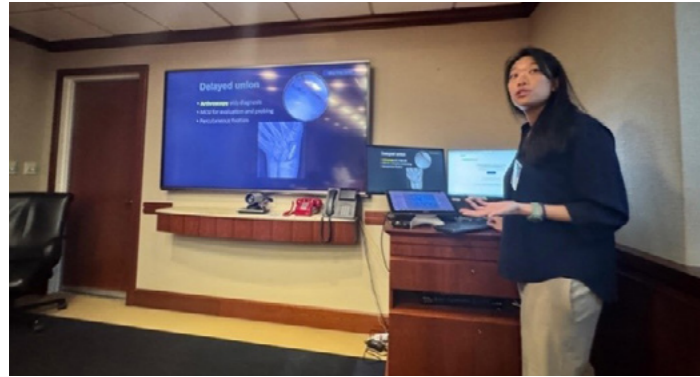
From high-level reconstructive procedures to complex trauma and nerve cases, every day was filled with learning opportunities. The dedication to education, research, and clinical excellence was evident throughout the fellowship, and the hospitality extended by the entire team made the experience both seamless and fulfilling.

Following the fellowship, attending the IFSSH-IFSHT 2025 Triennial Congress further enriched the journey, providing a global platform to engage with leading hand surgeons, explore new advancements in the field, and build lasting professional connections.

In summary, this fellowship offered a unique and comprehensive immersion into the world of hand surgery at the highest level. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity, the mentorship of Dr. Eberlin, and the warmth and professionalism of the entire MGH team.

Elaine Lo - Taiwan
Host Center: Hospital for Special Surgery, New York, New York, USA

I'm I-Ning (Elaine) Lo from Taipei Veterans General Hospital in Taiwan. And I was incredibly fortunate to be chosen as one of the travelling fellows for the 2025 IFSSH & IFSHT Congress in Washington DC, with the opportunity to visit the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) in New York City for one week prior to the conference. The overall experience was very rewarding and memorable. I will summarize my experience under the following topics.



Observation in HSS

The staff at the HSS were very welcoming! I was assigned to shadow Dr. Osei mostly and Dr. Hotchkiss. Dr. Osei's surgery was very efficient and precise. On one of the days, he, and Dr. Fuffa worked together on a case of complex traumatic brachial plexus injury. They performed a gracilis free functional muscle transfer to replace the entire biceps muscle. Dr. Fuffa clearly demonstrated the technique to harvest the gracilis free musculocutaneous flap. It was interesting to observe the hand fellows performing the microsurgical anastomosis of nerves and vessels under supervision of the attending surgeons.

I also got to observe a contralateral C7 transfer for a birth trauma-related BPI patient with Dr. Zlotolow. There was an interesting case of biceps-brachialis tenodesis by Dr. Hotchkiss. Throughout the surgeries, all the doctors were very friendly and answered any questions we had. I also shadowed Dr. Osei's clinic and got to observe his smooth interaction with his patients and other staff on the team. On the last day, I paid a visit to their wonderful Hand Therapy Center which and were able to see their amazing workspace and elaborate services.

Learning from peers

It is the best to be travelling with a group of other fellows from different backgrounds because we learn so much from each other, including our different experience, expertise, personalities, perspectives, and plans for the future. In our HSS group, we had Sze-Ryn from Singapore who is an old-time friend of mine, Barbs from the Philippines and Diego from Colombia. During our morning meeting of travelling fellow presentation, we learned so much about each other: Sze's expertise in wrist arthroscopy, Barbs' combined interest in hand surgery and bone tumors, and Diego's passion for nerve surgery and his unique sense of humor. And later that night, at the fellows' dinner we got to exchange more of our stories with each other and the hand fellows in HSS.



IFSSH 2025 in Washington DC

The conference itself was very well-organised. The opening ceremony was amazing, featuring a cabaret performance from the best-selling Broadway musical Hamilton! The exciting music and lyrics got everyone stirring in their seats! And we were privileged with the opportunity to walk with the IFSSH Pioneers of Hand Surgery from all around the world onto the stage. Throughout the four-and-a-half-days of the conference, I focused more on wrist arthroscopy surgery, nerve transfer and spastic surgery, my main fields of interest. I learned a lot, made connections with experts and formed some future plans for fellowships. I also got to catch up with some old friends and made some new ones!

I'm very grateful for this opportunity as an IFSSH Travelling Fellow. Three years ago, I attended the IFSSH/IFSHT Congress in London, knowing absolutely no one. I did a few talks and left feeling a bit lonely and unconnected. This year, the situation was completely different and partly because of evolving personal experience

and networking but for the most part because I had a group of peers to learn from and excel together. Amidst the vibrant artistic New York City and the full blooming cherry blossoms in DC, this has been a beautiful and truly inspirational experience, and I am deeply thankful to have been part of it.

Dr Mahamud Lawal - Nigeria
 Host Center: Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Please accept this letter as an expression of my profound gratitude to the American Association for Hand Surgery (AAHS), the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH), and the International Federation of Societies for Surgery of the Hand (IFSSH) for selecting me as a recipient of the highly competitive 2025 Triennial Travelling Fellowship. It is with immense honour that I, a surgeon practicing in Sub Saharan Africa, have been recognised in this significant way.

Having completed my Plastic Surgery residency in 2018 at a level 1 trauma centre in Lagos, Nigeria, I further pursued specialized training through a hand and microsurgery fellowship at Assiut University Hospital in Egypt. This was followed by invaluable exposure in India under the mentorship of Dr. Bhatia Anil Ghanshyam, where I had the opportunity to observe a diverse range of hand, brachial plexus, and free flap cases across six different hospitals.

The timing of this prestigious fellowship is truly ideal, as it provides a crucial opportunity for me to refine my surgical practice through invaluable observerships, expand my professional network with colleagues from around the globe, and establish vital contacts with the American medical industry.



I am eager to return to my country and apply the remarkable knowledge and techniques I have acquired. While I anticipate challenges in adapting these advancements to our local context, I am deeply committed to fostering greater collaboration among hand surgery societies both within Nigeria and across international borders.

My aim is to bridge the gap between global advancements and local practice, thereby enhancing patient care and promoting the advancement of hand surgery in my region through strengthened partnerships facilitated by this fellowship.

Thank you once again for this extraordinary opportunity. I am confident that the knowledge and connections gained through this fellowship will have a lasting impact on my career and the development of hand surgery in Sub Saharan Africa.

Dr Felma Rayel - Philippines
Host Center: Hospital for Special Surgery, New York, New York

The International Federation for Surgery of the Hand (IFSSH) is a prestigious group where various Societies for Surgery of the Hand throughout the world connect to share their knowledge and experiences.



As the sole hand surgeon in Region V (Bicol) in the Philippines, I serve approximately 6 million people, providing a role in delivering specialized care in hand surgery. This Fellowship gave me an opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues and gather information to share locally in my country.

My Travelling Fellowship was in the Hospital for Special Surgery, New York City 17-21 March 2025.



I had the honor of observing under Dr. Steve K. Lee, the Chief of the Hand and Upper Extremity Service, and an awesome peripheral nerve surgeon, and Dr. Duretto Fufa, who specialises in Reconstruction and Microsurgery.

I was able to learn from several surgeries done in the HSS Main Hospital and the Ambulatory Surgery Center. Most notably:

- CMCJ Suspension Arthroplasty
- Techniques in Vascularized Bone Grafting
- Gracilis Free Musculocutaneous Transfer in a Brachial Plexus Surgery
- MCPJ Arthroplasty
- Ulnar Nerve Supercharging
- Thumb UCL Reconstruction

I also shadowed both Drs. Lee and Fufa during their clinics, seeing how they manage and interact with their patients.

Each of the Travelling Fellows presented a lecture to the Hand Service on 20 March 2025. I presented about my country and my hospital, and shared an innovative case we had that was accepted for presentation at the IFSSH Triennial Congress.

Being in New York, I couldn't pass the chance to go around the city and be a tourist. I went to several sites and landmarks, ate famous New York dishes, and discovered a new love for musicals.

The following week, the IFSSH-IFSHT Triennial Congress was held in Washington, DC from 24-28 March 2025. I met the rest of the Travelling Fellows and the Pioneers of Hand Surgery.

There were a lot of great lectures and research presentations. I would have attended all the lectures, if only I could multiply and split my time between them!





Thank you Drs. Diego Rincon-Cardozo (Colombia), Elaine Lo (Taiwan), Sze Ryn Chung (Singapore), and to the rest of my Travelling co-Fellows. It was a pleasure getting to know you guys.

Finally, I am extremely grateful to the International Federation for Surgery of the Hand (IFSSH), the American Association for Hand Surgery (AAHS), and the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH) for this incredible experience. Being chosen as 1 of 24 Fellows worldwide gave me a sense of pride, and with it comes the responsibility of sharing with my colleagues back home the things I have learned.

I have made many friends and professional connections I never thought I would. I have learned a lot of techniques, tips, and pearls that I can apply locally, and teach future orthopaedic surgeons in my country.

Dr Caroline Brum Sena - Brazil
Host Center: Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA

Doing a fellowship in hand surgery at Duke University was a turning point in my career. Being at one of the most respected centres in the world gave me a deep dive into advanced surgical techniques and new approaches to challenging hand conditions. I had the opportunity to see wrist prostheses (I had never seen anything like that before), cadaver training for phalanx and metacarpal prostheses, brachial plexus decompression due to cervical ribs, surgical treatment of rhizarthrosis, and many other surgeries. More than just technical learning, my experience at Duke taught me about excellence, ethics, and precision in every detail of medical practice. Working alongside world-renowned surgeons and actively participating in the care of international patients helped me grow not only as an orthopaedist, but as a human being.

Game night was fun with everyone there, especially later when we had an open bar until the end.

Same as in New York, I was also able to tour around Washington, DC during my free time. It was a very beautiful time to visit DC during the Cherry Blossom season. I would go back again to visit all the museums.

Thank you to my host, the Hospital for Special Surgery, Hand and Upper Extremity Service, Drs. Steve Lee and Duretti Fufa, hand fellows, orthopaedic residents, nurses and other staff.

Thank you also to Sarah, Belinda, Rama, Helen, and Felicia for all the assistance. Thank you to my colleagues from the Association of Hand Surgeons of the Philippines (AHSP) and my hospital, Bicol Medical Center (BMC).

I return to Brazil with even more responsibility and passion for offering the best to my patients. With new ideas, valuable connections, and the certainty that shared knowledge is what moves medicine forward. Representing Brazil in this high-performance space was an honor. And this journey reinforced a principle that has always guided me: never stop learning. I would like to thank my fellows who shared this experience with me and made it more than special. I would like to thank Dr. Ruch and his entire team, and the entire IFSSH for organising it. It was truly a unique experience. Thank you very much.

Dr Brahman Shankar Sivakumar - Australia
Host Center: Curtis National Hand Center, Baltimore, MD, USA

It was an honour to be selected as one of the IFSSH-AAHS/ASSH Travelling Fellows for 2025. Our visit was structured to follow the IFSSH meeting in Washington. This meeting was a great experience, with informative sessions and discussions designed to challenge traditional paradigms in hand surgery. It was also wonderful to catch up with old friends from around the world, as well as establish many new ones.

Personal highlights included opportunities to chair a session on pain management and targeted muscle reinnervation, supervise a resident presenting research on wrist arthroscopy, and walk alongside one of the fathers of hand surgery in Australia, Graham Gumley, as he was inducted as an IFSSH Pioneer of Hand Surgery.

The setting, too, was beautiful, with cherry blossoms framing the architecture of the nation's capital. Morning runs at the national mall and visits to the monuments and museums rounded out the schedule.

Following a visit to see family in Philadelphia over the weekend, I spent a week at the renowned Curtis National Hand Centre in Baltimore. This centre was founded in 1975, and has grown to become one of the largest hand centres in the world. I spent most of my time with Dr Jim Higgins, who was both an amazing host and fantastic teacher. Watching him perform a medial femoral condyle flap for a scaphoid waist non-union (an operation that he has popularized) was a privilege. My visit coincided with that of a team from Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Sweden – led by Dr Carina Reinholdt, they are leaders in the field of tetraplegia surgery, and it was great to pick their brains and establish connections.

I found this travelling fellowship extremely worthwhile and highly encourage young surgeons to apply for it in the future .



Dr Higgins (with an AFL ball from his fellowship in Australia).