

Empowered by Rotary: My Transformative Fellowship at the Craniofacial Center, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, Taiwan

My experience as a fellow at the Craniofacial Center of Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taiwan has been one of the most transformative and rewarding chapters of my medical career. The fellowship allowed me to immerse myself in a multidisciplinary approach to craniofacial disorders, while learning from world-renowned experts in the field. The knowledge and skills I gained during my time there have not only shaped my professional growth but also broadened my perspective on patient care and the integration of advanced technologies in medical practice.

This journey began with a cleft lip and palate global grant project run by Rotary Club of Bali Nusa Dua with operations conducted at my workplace, the Dharma Yadnya Hospital in Bali. The project aimed to provide much-needed surgical interventions and follow-up care to children born with cleft lip and palate—a condition that affects thousands of children globally. Despite the challenges we faced, the project's success in offering initial surgeries was incredibly rewarding. However, it became clear that there was a need for more specialized skills and knowledge to provide comprehensive and sustainable care for these patients. Recognizing the need to build a stronger foundation in craniofacial surgery, Rotary Club of Bali Nusa Dua had built an element of surgeon training into the grant and I was selected for a fellowship program at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital. The fellowship, made possible through funds raised by the Bali club and with the support of The Rotary Foundation in Chicago, would allow me to gain advanced training, which I could then bring back to enhance the Cleft Lip and Palate Project in Bali.

Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, located in Linkou, Taiwan, is one of the largest and most prestigious hospitals in Asia. The Craniofacial Center at Chang Gung has earned a global reputation for excellence in treating complex craniofacial conditions, ranging from congenital deformities to trauma and cancer-related deformities. The hospital's reputation for cutting-edge research, top-tier surgical expertise, and comprehensive patient care makes it an ideal place to pursue specialized training in craniofacial surgery.

I was impressed by the hospital's commitment to patient-centered care. The Craniofacial Center operates as a collaborative environment, with specialists from various fields such as plastic surgery, orthodontics, speech therapy, and psychology, all working together to provide holistic treatment for patients. This interdisciplinary approach was one of the most valuable aspects of my fellowship experience.

During my time at the center, I was involved in complex surgeries, including cleft lip and palate repairs, orthognathic surgery, cranial vault reconstruction, and more. Each surgery was a reminder of the profound impact our work can have on a patient's life. I also had the privilege of participating in preoperative evaluations and postoperative care, which allowed me to witness the entire journey patients go through.

The surgeons at Chang Gung were incredibly generous with their knowledge. I learned advanced surgical techniques that I had only read about before, and I was given hands-on opportunities to assist in surgeries under their supervision. What I appreciated most was the emphasis on patient safety, precision, and aesthetic outcomes, which I believe is the hallmark of craniofacial surgery. Another key takeaway from my fellowship is the emphasis placed on long-term care and follow-up for cleft lip and

palate patients. At Chang Gung, I observed how patients were tracked over many years, with ongoing support to monitor speech development, facial growth, and emotional well-being. This continuity of care ensures that patients are not only treated surgically but are also supported throughout their development.

Chang Gung Memorial Hospital is at the forefront of integrating technology into medical practice. Throughout my fellowship, I had the chance to work with the latest imaging technologies such as 3D facial scanning and virtual surgical planning. These tools allowed for better preoperative planning and more accurate surgical outcomes. The hospital's commitment to utilizing these technologies ensured that I was always learning about the newest advancements in the field.

The research component of the fellowship was equally enriching. The Craniofacial Center is involved in ongoing clinical and translational research aimed at improving surgical techniques, enhancing patient outcomes, and advancing the understanding of craniofacial conditions. They have several research projects, focusing on areas such as cleft lip and palate management and post-surgical quality of life assessments. These were invaluable in helping us gain a deeper understanding of the scientific and medical principles underlying craniofacial care.

Taiwan is a culturally rich and welcoming country, and my time there was not only professionally rewarding but also personally enriching. I had the opportunity to explore the beautiful island, sample its unique cuisine, and engage with the local community. The people of Taiwan are incredibly kind, and their hospitality made my stay even more memorable. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to **Panchiao West Rotary Club** for their warm welcome and for inviting me to be a part of their anniversary celebration. It was an honor to be included in such a special occasion, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to connect with such a dedicated and inspiring group of individuals. Their kindness and generosity made the experience memorable, and I am grateful for the chance to celebrate this milestone with them.

The experience of working in a different cultural context also helped me grow as a physician. One of the most enriching aspects of my fellowship at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital was the diverse group of fellowship participants I had the privilege of working with. Fellow medical professionals from all over the country—and even from different parts of the world—came together to learn and exchange ideas. This community of passionate individuals, each with unique experiences and backgrounds, enriched my own learning journey. I was exposed to a diverse range of people and gained insight into the cultural nuances that influence how they perceive and approach medical care.

Reflecting on my fellowship at the Craniofacial Center of Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, I can confidently say it has not only deepened my passion for craniofacial surgery but also reinforced my commitment to improving the lives of patients with complex facial and cranial conditions. The knowledge I gained, the skills I developed, and the relationships I forged with both colleagues and patients will continue to shape my practice for years to come. As I progress in my career, I will carry the invaluable lessons learned at Chang Gung, applying them to provide the best possible care for my patients.

I am now equipped with advanced surgical techniques that will enable me to provide more precise and effective treatments for children with cleft lip and palate. Beyond technical skills, the fellowship emphasized the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to patient care—something I am eager to implement in Bali. The collaboration I experienced with orthodontists, speech therapists, psychologists, and other specialists will be vital in enhancing the holistic care we offer in Bali. By fostering a similar

collaborative approach within the project, I am confident we can improve outcomes for our patients and provide them with better long-term care. I also plan to implement a more structured follow-up program to track patients' progress over the years. This will ensure timely interventions, including any additional surgeries, and provide our patients the best opportunity for a healthy and fulfilling life.

I am profoundly grateful to the Rotary Club of Bali Nusa Dua and The Rotary Foundation for making this opportunity possible. This experience not only enhanced my clinical skills but also connected me with passionate medical professionals from around the world. The knowledge and techniques I have gained will continue to strengthen the ongoing Cleft Lip and Palate Project in Bali, improving care for children in need. It has also deepened my commitment to global health and underscored the transformative power of collaboration in medicine. I am excited to bring these lessons back to make a lasting impact. This fellowship also served as a powerful reminder of the global nature of healthcare. By sharing experiences and learning from one another, we formed lasting connections that will continue to influence our work long after the fellowship has ended. I look forward to maintaining these relationships and continuing to collaborate with my fellowship colleagues from across the globe.

In conclusion, my time at the Craniofacial Center of Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, supported by the Rotary Club of Bali Nusa Dua and The Rotary Foundation, has been nothing short of transformative. It offered me the opportunity not only to advance my technical expertise but also to become part of a community dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with craniofacial conditions. For any aspiring craniofacial surgeon or medical professional, this fellowship presents an unparalleled chance to learn, grow, and make a meaningful impact in healthcare. I am deeply grateful to Rotary for enabling this experience and for their continued commitment to enhancing global healthcare. Through their financial assistance and commitment to global health initiatives, I was able to fully immerse myself in the cleft lip and palate project without concern for travel, accommodation, or living expenses. Rotary's support not only made this fellowship possible but also gave me the chance to connect with an international network of medical professionals dedicated to improving patient care worldwide. Their investment in my professional development has had a direct and meaningful impact on the lives of children in Bali. With advanced skills and a renewed sense of purpose, I am returning to the project to contribute even more effectively. Rotary's dedication to global health and community service has strengthened my expertise in craniofacial surgery and expanded the reach of the Cleft Lip and Palate Project, allowing us to serve even more children in need. Their belief in the power of cross-cultural exchange and collaboration provided me with an invaluable perspective on the global impact of craniofacial surgery.

The Cleft Lip and Palate Project by Rotary Club of Bali Nusa Dua has been ongoing since 1994 and until today more than 2500 free operations have been provided to underprivileged children of Bali and its surrounding islands.

Anyone interested in becoming part of this lives changing service project, please feel free to contact Rotary Club of Bali Nusa Dua for more information: president@rotarybali.org







