

The 2015 Parekh Indo-US Foot and Ankle Surgery Annual Meeting Experience (Indian Adventures)

The next time you think our duty hours are strict, know that we have it better than the airlines! What started as a very bumpy ride (literally) to India that was wrought with crew hours restrictions, flight delays, innocently walking out of an airport and almost not being let back in, and lost baggage, ended up in a unique experience that was both meaningful and inspirational.

Bengaluru, India, was the site of the 6th annual Parekh Indo-US Foot and Ankle Surgery Annual Meeting. The meeting was presented by the Parekh Family Foundation which was started in honor of Dr Selene Parekh's parents, Guntant and Bharati Parekh, in order to contribute to India in meaningful way. This year's meeting was held in January 9 to 11, 2015, with the goals of disseminating and sharing techniques of foot and ankle surgery among surgeons and medical care providers from India, South Asia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Dr Selene Parekh served as the International Course Chair and host of the Parekh Family Foundation. Our Indian colleagues included National Course Chair Rajiv S Shah, MBBS, and Course Patron Dr DC Sundaresh. Local Course Chairpersons also included Dr Harshad M Shah, Dr Naresh Shetty and Dr Ajoy SM US faculty included such prestigious physicians as Dr David Pedowitz from the Rothman Institute, Dr Sam Flemister Jr from the University of Rochester, and Dr Christopher Gross, one of our 2014 to 2015 Duke Foot and Ankle Surgery Fellows. Last on the totem pole was myself, the 2015 Parekh Family Resident Scholar and a Duke Orthopaedic Surgery Chief Resident.

The adventure began on 6th January which was to mark the start of my travels to India. Thirty-one and half hours, four airports, four movies, and several naps later, Dr Parekh and I landed in Bengaluru on 8th January. And, while I may have been bagless due to a slight problem with the airline losing it, my eagerness and excitement was nonetheless apparent. We were greeted at the airport by Inderjit, an Orthopaedic Resident at MS Ramaiah Hospital and soon to be my most favorite person in Bengaluru. Weaving through the flow of traffic that was bound by no traffic laws, Inderjit delivered us safely to our home away from home, Le Meridien hotel. Travel-weary and without any clean clothes until my bag arrived, I retired to my room to sleep off the 10 and half hours time difference and jet lag while my energetic companion Dr Parekh headed back outside to the hospital to meet the patients planned for surgery the following day.

The first day of the conference, 9th January, began with a team workout as Dr Gross and I partook in the hospitality and exercise equipment of Le Meridien just outside our hotel room doors. Revived by the cardiovascular wake-up call, we enjoyed a variety of Indian foods at the breakfast buffet. Coffee and chai tea were plentiful and full to the brim with milk and sugar. We ate our fill avoiding fresh fruits, vegetables, unprocessed dairy products and unbottled water and ice to stave off any unpleasant GI experiences. The first morning of the conference began with a beautiful introduction and a candle lighting ceremony was performed. The presented quote 'From ignorance, lead me to truth. From darkness, lead me to light. From death, lead me to immortality' set the tone for an enlightening weekend full of shared learning and exchanges. We dove straight into a wonderful morning of lectures from various faculty which, following a flavorful lunch of Indian cuisine, was further highlighted by an afternoon full of surgeries performed live by Dr Parekh and other faculty members. Surgical cases included a Morton's neuroma revision excision, soft-tissue mass excision and hallux varus correction, ankle fracture malunion correction, open reduction internal fixation of an acute calcaneal fracture as well as treatment of a subacute malunion, and lastly a subtalar arthrodesis. Dr Parekh recorded his surgical exploits via Google Glass which he first introduced the previous year at the 5th annual meeting in Jaipur. Two operating suites were utilized with live feed and sound transmitted to the lecture auditorium where conference attendees were able to watch and ask questions throughout the surgery. The operating suites were impressively well-equipped and larger than many of the operating rooms I have experienced while at Duke! The staff was incredibly friendly and eager to assist and the patients of course were exceedingly appreciative. Under the operating room lights while staring at a calcaneus fracture, I could nearly forget I was thousands of miles from home and operating in a foreign country. The principles of orthopaedic surgery, it appears know no continental bounds.

We finished with surgical cases around 6 pm and headed back to the hotel to clean up and then the faculty gathered to have dinner together at the hotel restaurant. Here, we got to interact and get to know one another better. We were also



joined by Dr Parekh's wife, Zankhna, and Lindsay Hack, two physical therapists participating in the first 1 day physical therapy portion of the conference planned for 10th January. We enjoyed an extensive meal together with more Indian food options than one could possibly eat! Following great conversation and with full bellies, we parted ways to prepare for another great day.

10th January began with an exhilarating team workout followed by consumption of all the calories just burned at the breakfast table. Now seemingly old friends, the conference faculty shared in entertaining conversation as we made our way through the treacherous traffic once again to the conference. The morning was spent learning from faculty presenters in a lecture format which contrasted nicely with an afternoon of hands-on experience for all conference attendees. Half of the participants headed to a fresh cadaver lab where they were able to explore the dissections, we had discussed the past 2 days while the remaining half had the opportunity to work with several implants on sawbones and recreate internal fixation scenarios. Conference faculty was present at each venue providing suggestions and guidance along the way, ensuring each learner's questions were answered.

At the conclusion of the lab sessions, my adventure bug could be contained no longer! Inderjit was kind enough to take Dr Gross, Dr Pedowitz and I to an Indian chocolate shop where we were able to satisfy our sweet teeth. Afterward, Dr Gross and I explored a local art school where I purchased a beautiful art piece that now proudly resides in my living room. We then had the bravado to ride a rickshaw to an outdoor bazaar filled with local crafts, clothing, street food, jewelry,



etc. The foot traffic was nonstop as pedestrians wove in and out of the shops lining crowded streets. At the encouragement of Dr Parekh, we stopped in McDonalds where we experienced the McAloo Tikka, an Indian ‘burger’ made of a potato and pea patty with special Indian spices and coated with breadcrumbs. While I was skeptical at first, because surely nothing in this world could beat the comfort food goodness of a Big Mac, I discovered that I just may be a convert into the McAloo Tikka. If only they served them in Durham, North Carolina! The evening was topped off by a spontaneous moto ride by a random friendly stranger. While Dr Gross and I approached rickshaw drivers to take us back to the hotel, we were intercepted by a young man who offered to take us back on his moped. Clearly, lacking in judgment for the moment, we assented and held our breaths while we sped down the congested streets of Bengaluru, and surprisingly made it to Le Meridien in one piece!

The night was capped off by a social gathering and meal shared by all of the conference faculty at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, one of the most picturesque crickets stadiums in India. The Indian snacks, food, drinks, and conversation were plentiful. We celebrated what was so far a very successful conference as well as the coming together of great minds in the field of foot and ankle in order to better the understanding and appreciation of the subspecialty. It was with heavy hearts that we filed out of the stadium at the end of the night, knowing that there was only one more day left to be spent together.

The final day of the conference, 11th January, began much the same as all the rest. We started the day off right with a team workout and breakfast, then traipsed off to the conference one last time. Arriving unscathed, we gathered in the lecture auditorium for the remaining lectures. Great discussions were had among the presenters and the audience as lessons learned over the past 3 days culminated in the synthesis of many topics. The faculty assembled for one last group photo and at the conclusion of the conference we were given our very own pizza party! If you have never tried Pizza Hut sans the traditional pepperoni, but with paneer, corn, jalepeños, and green peppers instead, you are missing out! Most of us embraced and said our goodbyes as many of the faculty headed off to the airport to begin the long journey back to the United States. Together we had shared a lot, laughed a lot, taught a lot but, most importantly, learned a lot along the way.

While I am not sure, I will ever get used to male and female lines at the airport in India, the voyage back home was seamless. Luckily, none of my flight crews were in danger of going over hours and nary a delay was had. Upon arriving to Durham and unpacking my bag, I could not help but smile and be grateful for such an amazing opportunity. Not only does Dr Parekh strive to contribute to the education of orthopaedic surgeons outside the United States but also he supports residents such as myself to participate in the learning process. Thank you to Dr Parekh and all of the faculty and attendees of the 6th Annual Parekh Indo-US Foot and Ankle Surgery Annual Meeting for such a memorable experience. There are many lessons learned that I will take away from my India experience, but certainly one of them is that international exploration and collaboration is paramount to collectively advancing as a specialty such that we might provide excellent care for our patients. I hope that by sharing my perspective with all of you that I might inspire the very same ‘adventure bug’.

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