FELLOWSHIP

LEARNING WITHOUT BORDERS

Dr Antti Kaivorinne from Finland shares his fellowship experience in SGH, Department of Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery, Wrist Trauma and Disorders



Dr Antti Kaivorinne with Associate Professor Andrew Chin

What was your impression of Singapore's healthcare industry?

It's definitely very high-quality and among the best healthcare systems in the world. One of the world's strongest economies enables access to all vital, up-to-date equipment and technology for highly educated specialists. The system also appeared to be very efficient.

Are there any differences compared to the healthcare industry in your country?

The healthcare system in Finland is also among the best in the world, so there are no major differences. Both countries have strong public sectors, although public healthcare is more widely used by citizens in Finland. Due to the principle of equality, healthcare is also more affordable for patients regardless of income. The downside is that it isn't quite as efficient as the healthcare system in Singapore.

Why did you choose to apply to Singapore/SGH for your attachment?



Dr Antti Kaivorinne with Dr Chung Sze Ryn

By the start of my attachment, I had already been working as a consultant in hand surgery for 9.5 years. I wanted to step out of my daily routines for a while and gain new insights into wrist surgery, particularly wrist arthroscopy.

The main reasons for choosing Singapore were English as the working language and the overall safety of the country because my wife and son accompanied me during the attachment. Hand surgery is an independent specialty in both Finland and Singapore. Furthermore, wrist arthroscopy is generally performed more frequently in Asia than in Europe, offering an opportunity for broader clinical exposure in a shorter period of time.

SGH is recognized as one of the best hospitals in the world and provides high-quality patient care. My supervisor, Associate Professor Andrew Chin, is an internationally recognized expert in wrist surgery with extensive experience. These were key factors in my decision. Additionally, I had the opportunity to avoid the Finnish cold winter.

Did you face any difficulties (e.g. culture, language) during your attachment? What were they?

Overall, there were no major difficulties. I usually study the local customs and culture thoroughly before visiting a new country. Finland is also a country with many rules, so this aspect did not come as a surprise.

However, the level of bureaucracy and the processing times for various applications were longer than I had expected.

I'm comfortable communicating in English. But the diversity of Singaporean and Chinese dialects combined with fast-paced speech was sometimes challenging to understand – especially in the operating theatre where masks further impeded communication.

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Dr Antti Kaivorinne (middle) with colleagues outside the operating theatre

During your attachment, what was a 'typical' day like?

The day typically began with educational sessions from 07:30 to 08:30. After that, I'd go either to the clinic or, more often, to the operating theatre. Most of my time was spent observing and participating in various wrist surgeries. During shorter intervals between clinical duties, I worked on progressing the randomized controlled trials I am involved with in Finland.

What were your learning experiences?

My most significant takeaway was learning new arthroscopic techniques for diagnosing and repairing various wrist ligament injuries and fractures. I was also able to compare treatment strategies, methods, and outcomes between the Departments of Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery at SGH and Tampere University Hospital.

Additionally, I participated in the Singapore Wrist Arthroscopy Course and the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Singapore Society for Hand Surgery, which provided valuable opportunities for professional networking with colleagues from other hospitals in Singapore.

How has the attachment made an impact on you?

It expanded my expertise in wrist arthroscopy. I intend to apply these enhanced skills in future clinical practice and share my experiences with colleagues in Finland.


Dr Antti Kaivorinne (middle) with colleagues and other fellows/visitors from the Department of Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery

Do you have any interesting/memorable experience during your attachment that you would like to share?

At the end of my attachment, I had the opportunity to give a presentation about my home country, its people and culture, as well as hand surgery in Finland. I also greatly enjoyed connecting with colleagues outside of work during a dinner hosted by Associate Professor Chin.

What did you enjoy most during your attachment?

I particularly enjoyed observing and learning how patients with various wrist pathologies are treated on the other side of the world, working alongside Associate Professor Chin and Dr. Chung Sze Ryn. I'm also deeply grateful for the support and hospitality shown by the colleagues in the Department of Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery. I hope we'll meet again in the future!

Would you recommend SGH to interested fellows? Why?

Absolutely. SGH offers top-tier specialized healthcare services. Regardless of where you come from, the quality of treatment and education is exceptionally high, and the experience is highly rewarding.

How would you describe your fellowship experience in 3 words?

Heartwarming, hot, indelible