

# SURGEONS NEWS

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2009 American College of Surgeons International Guest Scholars

## American College of Surgeons International Guest Scholarship Report

By Giuseppe R. Nigri, MD, PhD, FACS

I would first like to thank the American College of Surgeons, its International Relations Committee, and the Abdol Islami Foundation for the great opportunity they have given me. This is the chance that the ACS gives yearly to 10 surgeons from around the world. This unique experience usually culminates as a turning point in the surgical careers of all of us.

I became aware of this scholarship when I became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in 2007. At that time, in New Orleans, while I was walking around the halls of the Hilton waiting for the Initiate Ceremony, I found the scholarship brochure on a table. I took it, applied, and won the scholarship.

The preparation for the trip took a long time. In this

process, Ms. Kate Early played a crucial role. I would like to thank Ms. Early for the continuous and effective help she gave me during the months preceding the trip. She helped me contact the different departments I chose to visit, and she notified the administration of my University about my selection as International Guest Scholar. This expedited the necessary processes to prepare for the trip. It was a pleasure to meet Ms. Early in Chicago.

I would also like to thank my mentor, Dr. Richard Finley, for his help and constant presence during every event in which I was involved at the Congress. To Dr. Finley go also my congratulations. During the same ACS Congress in Chicago, he was elected

Vice President of The American College of Surgeons. He was present at the College's 2009 International Travelers session entitled, "International Perspective in Surgery," where each of the International Guest Scholars gave a presentation to provide a glimpse into surgery worldwide. In this session, I gave a talk entitled, "Surgical Workforce in Italy." Dr. Fong was the Chairman of the Session.

### CHICAGO

I arrived in Chicago on October 10, 2009. After settling down at the Essex Inn Hotel in front of the Hilton Hotel, the ACS Headquarters for the Clinical Congress, I went to the McCormick Place Convention Center using one of the convenient shuttle buses offered



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by the ACS. I had the opportunity to witness the Initiation Ceremony, which is always fascinating and reminded me of when I became a Fellow of the ACS in 2007. Everything I needed to do was clear to me in advance because Ms. Early had already given me valuable advice through email. Dr. Dr. Graham T. Layer and Dr. Katherine Liu, from Rush University, Chicago, were also waiting for us and ready to assist us with attending the numerous activities at the Congress. I attended all of the scheduled daily activities for International Guest Scholars. I also participated in the Colon and Rectal Surgery postgraduate course, which proved to be quite interesting.

One of the highlights for International Guest Scholars was the luncheon, where the scholars received a certificate from the ACS and had the opportunity to meet prior International Guest Scholars.

We also attended the Breakfast Meeting of the International Relations Committee, during which we met the Members of the ACS International Committee and discussed the future projects of the Committee with them. We also attended the prestigious Board of Governors reception and dinner, where I met the Governor of the Italian Chapter of the ACS, Prof. Gaspari.

At the Clinical Congress, I attended different symposia and sessions, even with the tight schedule of the International Guest Scholars.

During the New ACS Fellows reunion, I met an old friend of mine, Dr. Michael Landis, and his wife who now works as a vascular surgeon in Virginia. Dr. Landis and I worked in the same Dr. LaMuraglia vascular lab in 1999-2000 at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. At that

**“The American College of Surgeons offers International Guest Scholarships to competent young surgeons from countries other than the United States or Canada who have demonstrated strong interests in teaching and research”**

time, we were both working on vascular applications of photodynamic therapy (PDT). He was specifically working on PDT-treated xenografts, a study on which we collaborated. This was another opportunity to talk to Dr. Landis and receive his advice on career development. He also introduced me to other people, which is always interesting during any meeting.

### NEW YORK CITY

My post-Congress tour began in New York City at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC), where I spent 1 month. I met the Hepatobiliary Pancreatic team with Dr. Jarnaging, Dr. D’Angelica, and Dr. Allen, as well as the GI and Mixed Tumor team with Dr. Fong, Dr. Brennan and Dr. Coit. The cases I observed included numerous duodenopancreatectomies, distal pancreatectomies, right and left hepatectomies, and gastrectomies.

I also attended some outstanding lectures that Dr. Blumgart presented to fellows, residents, and observers. The fellowship programs at the MSKCC are very prestigious, and residents from all over the United States apply each year. They also have an international fellowship program in surgical oncology that attracts people from all over

### CHICAGO

Left: Kate Early and Dr. Nigri at the McCormick Place Convention Center after the International Guest Scholar Luncheon  
Right: Dr. Giuseppe Nigri, Dr. Richard Finley (Vice President of the American College of Surgeons), and Dr. Bjorn Bruecher (exchange fellow from Germany)



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the world. While I was in New York, I met two of the International Guest Scholars from Chicago, Lohfa B. Chirdan from Nigeria and Dr. Sanjeev Misra from India, and spent lunch together. Dr. Fong invited me, Dr. Fernando Burdio, an International Guest Scholar from Spain who later came to MSKCC, and other fellows to dinner in a pub across the street from MSKCC.

During my stay in New York, I visited a friend of mine, Dr. Marcovalerio Melis, who is an Assistant Professor of Surgery at New York University and attending surgeon at the New York HHSVA. I befriended Marco at the ACS Clinical Congress in New Orleans in 2007. Since then, we began a scientific collaboration that allowed us to present interesting abstracts at the 2010 Academic Surgical Congress in San Antonio, Texas, and at the 2010 Annual Cancer Symposium of the Society for Surgical Oncology in St. Louis, Missouri. I spent 1 day in the OR at his hospital, visiting for the first time a VA Hospital in the United States. On this occasion, I was also kindly invited to Dr. Melis' apartment for dinner, where I met his family.

### BOSTON

I left MSKCC and New York City at the end of November and headed to Boston. I had been in Boston from 1999 to 2003, where I was a clinical and research fellow in surgery/vascular surgery and a resident in general surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. It was a great feeling to go back to the same place where I had many great professional experiences.

When I arrived to Boston, I met Ms. Michelle Ricciardi and Ms. Suzanne Williams, Assistants to Dr. Warshaw. Ms. Ricciardi

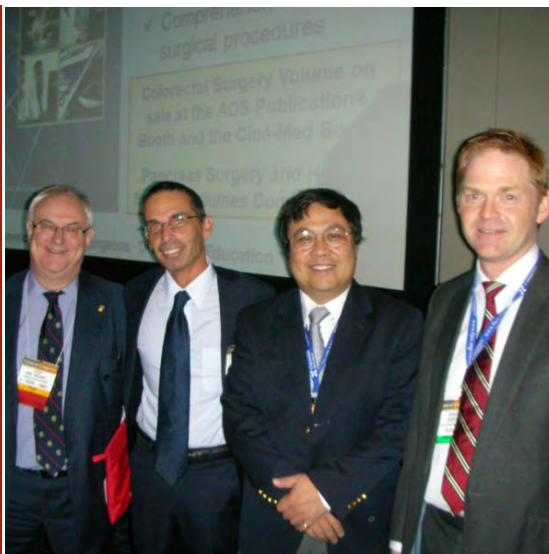
**“The scholarships provide the Scholars with an opportunity to visit clinical, teaching, and research activities in North America and to attend and participate fully in the educational opportunities and activities of the American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress”**

introduced me to Dr. Warshaw and Dr. Fernandez, and she took me to the OR to put on scrubs. She also took me to Dr. LaMuraglia's office. Dr. Glenn LaMuraglia, Associate Professor of Surgery, Vascular Surgery Division, was my mentor when I was a research fellow at MGH. Since then, I invited him twice to Italy as a Visiting Professor, and we became very good friends. We still collaborate on a very promising research project on PDT and complement inhibition and we took advantage of my visit to Boston to wrap the paper up and send it out for publication. Glenn invited me to lunch at his place with his children and sister. He also invited me to dinner at a restaurant at the spectacular Liberty Hotel, which is close to MGH.

I had the opportunity to get to know Dr. Warshaw and Dr. Fernandez when I was previously at MGH. I observed their work in the OR. They were usually teaching residents about cases such as duodenopancreatectomies or distal pancreatectomies. I admired the tremendous professionalism of the surgical and nursing staff at MGH. I attended every meeting and conference that I was able to. On Thursday morning, I attended the M&M and Surgical Grand Rounds that I used to attend when I was a resident. I also

### CHICAGO

*From left: Dr. Layer, Dr. Nigri, Dr. Yuman Fong (Chairman of the Session), and Dr. Andrew P. Barbour (International Guest Scholar from Australia)*



### BOSTON - MGH

*Dr. Nigri and Dr. Glenn LaMuraglia at the Division of Vascular Surgery*



American College of Surgeons, 2009 Clinical Congress, Chicago IL

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attended the Pancreatic Research Meeting, which I found very interesting and inspiring.

I also had the opportunity to get to know Dr. Cristina Ferrone better. In 2002, she was a PGY4 resident in general surgery at MGH when I was a PGY2. In 2005, I met her again at MSKCC where she was a surgical oncology fellow. She is now an attending at MGH and an Assistant Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. It was a genuine pleasure to observe Dr. Ferrone in the OR, watching her care for patients, carefully plan surgeries, and guide residents through successful operations. I observed her performing Whipple's procedures, laparoscopic distal pancreatectomies, and liver resections, all with a consistent pace and obvious surgical skill. She is deeply involved in pancreatic research, for which she has received numerous and important grants. Dr. Ferrone invited me to her home for dinner, and she introduced me to her husband, Joe, who is an orthopedic surgeon at MGH, and their 1-year-old son Peter. I am planning to invite Dr. Ferrone to give a talk at the Sapienza University of Rome and eventually nominate her for Visiting Professor in the future. I am sure we will both benefit from her presence in Rome.

I was supposed to visit Dr. Michael Sarr at the Mayo Clinic as part of my Scholarship, but I had to postpone my visit due to unforeseen work reasons. I hope to go to Rochester in the near future.

I returned to Rome in January 2010. Upon my return, the Italian Chapter of the American College of Surgeons acknowledged my experience on its official website ([www.facsitaly.org](http://www.facsitaly.org)).

In conclusion, the International Guest Scholarship was a great experience that exposed

me to a high level of surgical expertise. I followed different surgical groups and gained new ideas and concepts that can be applied to my own clinical practice. The most important gift given to me by the ACS was the opportunity to meet clinicians and scientists from the United States and elsewhere in the world. This has been a valuable opportunity that represents a turning point in the careers of International Guest Scholars. I hope that this marks the beginning of further cooperation with the ACS to promote the exchange of ideas among surgeons from different countries. I am genuinely looking forward to future involvements with the American College of Surgeons.



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### BOSTON - MGH

Left: Dr. Warsaw, Chief of Surgery, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, and Dr. Nigri

Right: Dr. Fernandez, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, and Dr. Nigri



Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston MA