

**Yuksel Altinel, MD, Turkey**

## **ASCRS International Traveling Scholarship Report 2016**

I was honored to be one of the recipients of the ASCRS traveling fellowship. My five-week fellowship included visiting Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, University Hospitals/Case Medical Center, Johns Hopkins Hospital, and Mayo Clinic. Each gave me the opportunity to learn skills that will help my future career in colorectal surgery.

In Turkey it is hard to find well-educated surgeons in all hospitals, and there are no multidisciplinary teams working on colorectal cancer management. Unlike the U.S., there are no fellowship programs in Turkey. The emergency and outpatient clinic department processes are different in the U.S., but the main surgical practice for colorectal cancer procedures are mostly similar.

The ASCRS Annual Meeting was well organized and successful. There were a variety of educational opportunities about surgery and presentations providing information on clinical research and trials. The lectures focused on new training techniques for robotic and laparoscopic colorectal surgery, and new modalities about research and social media were all amazing.

While visiting programs in the U.S., the most impressive aspect for me was the robotic case where I was able to sit on a chair and watch the low anterior resection. This was my first opportunity to participate in a live surgery case. This kind of opportunity is a miracle for me. Additionally, I had an opportunity to figure out the anastomotic leakage sponge placement for LAR procedure and how the patient evaluation is done.

I am thankful to the ASCRS for organizing and supporting this kind of clinical visit, and allowing me the opportunity to have such an experience. It will have a profound impact on my future life as a surgeon. During my brief visit to the United States, I had a great experience interacting with fantastic mentors. This fellowship made a real contribution to my colorectal surgery career and gave me a chance to meet wonderful people.

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### **One Year Later**

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The ASCRS Travel Scholarship helped me to realize my research goals. During my visit to different well-known institutions in the USA, I understood once more that research guides clinical and surgical improvement for better patient care. After my travelling fellowship, I attended at the colorectal surgery department at Cleveland Clinic, Florida as a research fellow for one year with the support of Turkish Cancer Society grant. Through the year, I have participated in many research projects with Dr. S. D. Wexner and Dr. G. DaSilva. They included observational studies of functional outcomes and young colorectal cancer. I had a chance to see many laparoscopic and traditional surgical techniques from Dr. Wexner and his team. We had many different video presentations at the meetings. The most important thing I learned from Dr. Wexner, who always encourages people around him to improve themselves.

With his encouragement, I applied to the master's program of clinical investigation at Harvard medical school, where I am now a master's student with a partial scholarship. In addition, I am working as a research fellow in the colorectal surgery department of Massachusetts General Hospital with my mentor Liliana G. Bordeianou.