TSRA Traveling Fellowship Award Update 2024

I had the extraordinary honor of spending a week with Dr. Bo Yang and his wonderful team at the University of Michigan, with the generous support of the Thoracic Surgery Residents Association (TSRA) Traveling Fellowship Award in 2024. I first met Dr. Yang at an Aortic Valve and Root course a year prior, and was especially thrilled to learn firsthand the nuances of his innovative “Y” incision aortic annular enlargement technique. It was a phenomenal opportunity to build upon that experience, and more, through an observership at the University of Michigan with surgical masters at a world-class institution.

During just a single week, I was astonished to see the range and complexities of aortic cases performed in one institution, including valve-sparing root replacements, aortic valve replacements with annular enlargement, Ross procedures, and multiple re-do valves, all of which were skillfully handled. Dr. Yang’s surgical precision and expertise were particularly inspiring, and I was amazed to witness the high level of training provided to the fellows, as well as the commitment to teaching both inside and outside of the operating room.

Additionally, as a Board-Certified Medical Illustrator (CMI), I had been collaborating with Dr. Yang to illustrate his techniques. My week at Michigan also allowed me the rare privilege to directly study and accurately illustrate a procedure performed by the surgeon who devised and perfected it. Over the course of several productive lunch and dinner meetings, we strategized putting together several manuscripts, as I poured over the finishing touches on the illustrations. I also enjoyed a spirited discussion with Dr. Shinichi Fukuhara on novel device designs, while sharing a passion for 3D modeling and innovation.

To this day, Dr. Yang continues to be a spectacular mentor, and I am filled with immense gratitude for the TSRA, STS, and Dr. Yang and his aortic team at the University of Michigan for an unforgettable and life-changing experience.

