Editorial
The International Family of Surgery; Journey Around the World

During the past few months I have traveled around the world, participating in major conferences and organizational meetings that have given me a great feeling about our close knit international family of plastic surgery. What a great group of people we got to know and a great feeling we received as we exchanged ideas and surgical strategies.

One situation that has stuck in my mind occurred many years back. I was asked to visit a region in which there was no specialist in plastic surgery or craniofacial surgery. Now, thirty years later, the region has over a thousand plastic surgeons practicing state-of-the-art techniques, helping their patients and correcting all sorts of deformities, congenital and acquired.

Starting in Tampa and going each time in a different direction allowed me to participate directly and personally with colleagues in different congresses and scientific meetings. In the Far East, I started in Mumbai with the Indian Society, which has a great organizational structure and a great congress. New findings presented were primarily related to looking at the epidemiological studies on the formation of cleft lip and plate and their incidence that is related to the lifestyle in certain parts of their country. In South America, the South American societies of plastic surgeons had a great congress with many sessions dedicated to reconstructive plastic surgery as well as a special session on craniofacial surgery. At the meeting, attendees witnessed the creation of the Pediatric Plastic Surgery Journal of South America. The journal will become their official publication and they will participate in the review process of original work submitted to it. In Australia, during a regular international congress new scientific notions were brought to open discussion. A synopsis of the congress will be presented in the journal. The President of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons traveled to Kuwait and presented the group with valuable educational materials, primarily electronic media. With that information, the meeting participants will be able to communicate efficaciously with the outside world. For the first time, they experienced the emotional attitude of being a part of the plastic surgery family. When President Cunningham gave them access to the website for the Plastic Surgery Journal, there were tears among many witnessing the emotional moment. “What generosity and how great that gesture,” was being uttered by everyone. The president of the German Society of Plastic Surgeons did the same. The great society and brothers and sisters in the Middle East that had previously fallen out of the professional arena were back in. Instructional courses, panel discussions with international faculty and open discussions allowed the Iraqi surgeons to present their work. Some are very talented reconstructive surgeons, in spite of the media portrayal of global plastic surgeons. A few weeks prior, the media reported that Iraqi plastic surgeons neglected the needs for reconstructive work and instead, performed only cosmetic surgery, which of course, is not true. The focus of the meeting was war injuries and mass casualties as well their treatment. A few members of the United States Medical corps were available and gave the highlights of the presentations, including availabilities of new technologies creating the best outcome for the young and injured and to save lives with fast and comprehensive resuscitation. In this issue of the journal, we have a few papers about the same topics and hope to include more in future issues on the same theme.

In the same region, the Syrian Society of Plastic Surgeons was holding its meeting, as was the Middle East Society of Burns and Reconstructive Surgery. The Minister of Health opened the ceremonies stressing the fact that patients’ report cards
for practitioners as well as efficacy and outcomes of performance and skill will be tied to maintenance of certification. He urged all to focus on reconstruction as well as trauma and to maintain their skills in cosmetic surgery. He made recommendations to avoid becoming engulfed in the aesthetic work and neglecting reconstructive surgical work and skills.

This was a very talented and young group which is enthusiastic about the specialty of plastic surgery. The Lebanese society also had their meeting and they are also as enthusiastic about the international arena.

Now that I am back in my hometown after traveling around the world, we must continue to work hard at home so we can go next time. Your journal is working hard for you and for all the international societies we represent to be present in all corners of the world to pursue our mission and vision as well as to continue being international in nature. We hope that we will help practicing plastic surgeons maintain their certification as the journal will continue to bring new practices to the forefront.

On a final note, during the coming year we will have more activities with global societies to help with education as well as to bring the advances and new technologies in the specialty to practicing plastic surgeons. Some will come and go and some will be here for a while, or at least until they are replaced by new technologies.

Mutaz B. Habal, MD, FRCS, FACS
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Announcement

5th International Congress of Maxillofacial and Craniofacial Distraction

June 21st – 24th 2006
Paris - Maison de la Chimie

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