

Report on the Introduction to Research for International Young Academics (IRIYA) Seminar, 27 Nov. - 1 Dec. 2011, RSNA Scientific Assembly & Annual Meeting, McCormick Place, Chicago

Vicci du Plessis

(Grey's Hospital, Pietermaritzburg)

Chicago! 'Perhaps the most typically American place in America.' (*James Bryce, 1888*)

My Chicago experience started off with an order of 'deep-dish pizza' from Pizzeria Due (the spillover restaurant of the original Pizzeria Uno where this authentic Chicago-style pizza has been served since 1943). There followed an evening of shopping along the stylish 'Magnificent Mile' on North Michigan Avenue!

With little time to spare before the orientation tour of the IRIYA Seminar, I attempted some sightseeing on a very blustery Sunday morning. Fighting the rain and chilly gusts off Lake Michigan with my newly-acquired, rather flimsy umbrella, I discovered first-hand how the city of Chicago earned the nickname 'the Windy City'! I passed the Chicago Tribune, crossed the Chicago River and explored Millennium Park, admiring the graceful ice-skaters and contemporary outdoor sculptures.

A convenient and superbly organised bus system (compliments of the RSNA) transferred me from the Chicago Marriott Hotel to McCormick Place on the shore of Lake Michigan – home to the annual RSNA meeting and the largest conference venue in the United States. Our orientation tour was led by Diane Tokarski, manager of the Department of International Relations and Education of the RSNA, whom we finally met in person after months of efficient e-mail organisation. At the Sunday evening reception function, we met the other course organisers and our fellow IRIYA participants (16 young radiologists selected from 13 different countries).

The seminar programme was well-structured, highly relevant and effectively run. We covered various topics concerning research, ranging from Research Question Design to Statistics to Manuscript Preparation. These were presented by lecturers from esteemed institutions such as Johns Hopkins and Thomas Jefferson Universities and the Harvard Children's Hospital. There was an interesting panel discussion during which we, the IRIYA participants, could ask a team of academic

radiologists any question pertaining to research or a career in academic radiology. We were also given the unique opportunity to present our own current research projects to a panel of experts at a research workshop; the sessions were co-ordinated by Fiona Miller, director of the Department of Research of the RSNA. What a privilege to receive valuable comments and constructive criticism from world-renowned radiology professors such as William Brant, William Mayo-Smith, Winfried Willinek, Stephan Voss and Johan Blickman!

Time was also allocated for our choice of the ever-popular RSNA refresher courses, as well as to explore the conference independently. With 59 097 attendees overall, a record-breaking 16 272 radiologists and 681 exhibiting companies at RSNA 2011, the experience was completely overwhelming! We were also given access to the Residents and Fellows' Lounge where we were able to meet American and international colleagues, and enjoy complimentary breakfasts, lunches and beverages.

A formal, closing dinner was held at the Chicago Marriott Magnificent Mile Hotel for the IRIYA and Introduction to Academic Radiology course participants (second-year American radiology residents), during which an American radiologist in private practice entertained us with a speech entitled Career Choices – a comical address discussing the pros and cons of careers in academic and private radiology.

The IRIYA Seminar provided a vital foundation for our future careers in academic radiology. Not only did we gain theoretical knowledge, but more importantly, IRIYA also facilitated the development of valuable relationships with international colleagues sharing an interest in research, as well as with potential professional mentors. On behalf of all the IRIYA participants, I express heartfelt gratitude to the Radiological Society of North America for granting us this extraordinary opportunity. I also thank the President of the RSSA, Dr Clive Sperry, as the opportunity to participate was made possible by virtue of the RSSA being an affiliated/ collaborating society of the RSNA.



IRIYA participants with organisers Fiona Miller, John Eng and Diane Tokarski (front centre, left to right)