



2023 World Symposium on Congenital Malformations of the Hand and Upper Limb

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA May 17-20, 2023

Collegiality, Learning, and Scientific Advances

The World Symposium on Congenital Malformations of the Hand and Upper Limb was a remarkable meeting. Delayed two years by the COVID pandemic (it has been 5 years since the 2018 Hong Kong meeting), the triannual meeting drew enormous interest and nearly 300 attendees. The Surgeons, Physicians, Residents/Fellows, Hand Therapists, and Researchers came from 6 continents and 36 countries. The meeting was hosted in Minneapolis, Minnesota given its ease for travel, broad cultural institutions, and nice May weather. The meeting was a culmination of much work over the last 5 years from the organizers, the program chairs, and the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH). The meeting organizers- Ann E. Van Heest, MD, Michelle A. James, MD, and Charles A. Goldfarb, MD- together with the program chairs- Lindley B. Wall, MD, Deborah C. Bohn, MD, and Mary Claire Manske, MD - created a packed 4- day symposium.

The International Federation of Societies for Surgery of the Hand (IFSSH), American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH), and Pediatric Hand Study Group (PHSG) each funded scholarships to allow 11 surgeons from middle to low-income countries to attend the symposium. It was amazing to have these special guests to share in the learning experience. These recipients attended all educational sessions and social events, allowing an interchange of ideas with all attendees on scientific updates covering limb development, pathogenesis, and care in 2023.



Welcome given by Ann E. Van Heest, MD, Charles A. Goldfarb, MD, Michelle A. James, MD, Lindley B. Wall, MD and Deborah C. Bohn, MD.

There were 4 busy days of learning opportunities. The first day included 4 precourses. The first, an update on the Basic Science of Limb Formation, was led by Kerby C. Oberg, MD, PhD and included a number of fantastic speakers sharing impactful research including the latest in bench to bedside information. The second precourse was designed for Occupational Therapists and led by Amy Lake, OTR/L, CHT, Katherine Dalton, BOT Hon I, MHSM, AHT (AHTA) and Silvia Minoia, BPT, MHandTherapy. They created an amazing experience with rave reviews from all who attended. Precourse 3, led by Ann E. Van Heest, MD, Deborah C. Bohn, MD, and Lindley B. Wall, MD was hosted at Gillette Children's Hospital with a practical discussion on the management of Cerebral Palsy and included direct patient interactions on the most up to date management in 2023. And finally, precourse 4 was led by Michelle A. James, MD, Mary Claire Manske, MD, and Charles A. Goldfarb, MD and explored the current state of Patient- Rated Outcome Measures and the status of various congenital registries across the world. The attendees gained new perspectives on how clinical research progress and the increasing role of registries and increasing collaboration.



PRE01: Basic Science Update: Upper Limb Development and Disorders – A Surgeon-Scientist Workshop.



Amy Lake, OTR/L, CHT and the PRE02: Pediatric Hand Therapy: Treating the Whole Child attendees.



PRE02: Pediatric Hand Therapy: Treating the Whole Child faculty.



Attendees of PRE04: Outcomes and Registries for Hand and Upper Limb Differences.

The 8 keynote speakers were the highlight of the meeting. Each speaker shared their experience and/ or research on a variety of issues pertinent to the care of those with birth differences of the upper extremity. Marybeth Ezaki, MD kicked off the main meeting by sharing a history of the field of congenital hand surgery and Kerby C. Oberg, MD, PhD followed with the latest updates on limb formation with a focus on pathogenesis of common anomalies. Building on the impact of basic science progress, Professeur Guillaume Canaud, who traveled from France, shared his remarkable role in the development of the newly FDA approved medication, Alpelisib, for PROS (PIK3CA related overgrowth syndromes). Dr Michelle Griffin - MBChB MSc MRes MRCS PhD shared laboratory insights on the role of mechanics in skin wound repair and fibrosis; this line of research carries optimism for an eventual ability to control the scarring process. Paul J. Orchard, MD provided a deep- dive on metabolic disorders, Sarah Tuberty, OTD, OTR/L gave us new insights into ableism (stereotypes/ practices that discriminate against and devalue people with disabilities) and participated in an ableism panel with Michelle A. James, MD and Lindsey McCracken (an adult with congenital limb difference). Lastly, Terry R. Light, MD shared a career's worth of experience in the Legacy Lecture.

The podium presentations were organized around the OMT Classification and included submitted research presentations, debates, and panel discussions. The sharing of research progress in every OMT domain with perspective added from the panel discussion was remarkable and all attendees gained new perspectives on patient care.

The learning opportunities were plentiful and were only surpassed by the social engagement. The opportunity to develop international relationships with new friends and reconnect with old ones at a variety of different events including the welcome reception and an evening on the Mississippi on a paddleboat tour was priceless. Every meal and coffee break allowed further discussions on our many practice and societal similarities and differences. We have missed these connections and the 2023 World Congenital Symposium provided a perfect opportunity for re-connection.



Side meetings were frequent including this one to discuss the OMT Classification.

Back row: Lindley B. Wall, MD, Charles A. Goldfarb, MD, David B. McCombe, MBBS, MD, FRACS

Front row: Wiebke Hülsemann and Wee Leon Lam, MB, ChB, MPhil, FRCS, Dip Hand Surgery

We are grateful for all the faculty and attendees who engaged so thoughtfully and created a wonderful meeting. Importantly, after discussion and an official vote, we have renamed the conference the World Congenital Symposium on Upper Limb Differences. We all look forward to the next meeting in 2026 in Coimbatore, India, hosted by S. Raja Sabapathy, MS, MCh, DNB, FRCS.

Charles A. Goldfarb, MD
Ann E. Van Heest, MD
Michelle A. James, MD