Donaji Rodriguez-Ortiz

My interest in chest wall deformities began during my second year of pediatric surgical residency and led me to pursue further training in pediatric thoracic surgery. The CWIG/AEGIS Traveling Fellowship gave me the opportunity to continue that journey by seeing chest wall surgery through the eyes of experts at Clínica Mi Pectus in Argentina and Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters (CHKD) in Norfolk, Virginia.

There are things you simply cannot learn from a paper. You have to be there.

At Clínica Mi Pectus, I had the opportunity to learn from a well-coordinated team with a shared approach to patient care. I participated in consultations with all surgeons on the team (Dr. Gaston Bellia, Dra. Luzia Toselli, Dra. Daniela Sanjurjo, Dr. Facundo Giacosa), followed patients from preoperative evaluation to postoperative care, and gained insight into their multidisciplinary assessment. I also learned about innovative surgical techniques, such as the sandwich technique, pain management estrategias such as cryoanalgesia, and the devices the team has developed to address specific clinical needs. Being included in their seminars and weekly clinical case discussions, as well as having the opportunity to assist in surgical procedures, made me feel truly part of the team. This experience reinforced the importance of teamwork and innovation in improving patient care.

At CHKD, I had the opportunity to learn at the center where the Nuss procedure was developed. Observing different surgeons (Dr. Robert Obermeyer, Dr. Michael Goretsky, Dr. Sani Yamout) allowed me to appreciate the subtle differences in their surgical techniques, their individual approaches, and how they select the most appropriate treatment for each patient. I was also involved in outpatient consultations, multidisciplinary evaluations, postoperative inpatient care, and follow-up visits. The team's willingness to explain every step in the operating room and discuss the reasoning behind their clinical and surgical decisions made this an invaluable learning experience.

Learning from two specialized centers allowed me to explore different protocols, techniques, and approaches to patient care, and to reflect on which practices could be adapted to the needs of our patients and healthcare system in Mexico.

I return home with a broader perspective, new knowledge, and meaningful professional and personal connections. At both centers, I found wonderful mentors and people I can now call friends. Knowing that I can continue learning from them and reach out to them whenever I have questions is one of the most valuable aspects of this fellowship, especially at this early stage of my career.

I am grateful to CWIG for creating this opportunity, to both teams for welcoming me and generously sharing their knowledge, and to AEGIS for making this experience possible.

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