

MESOT Fellowship Program

MESOT Fellowship Program (MFP) is an initiative aimed at promoting and advancing organ transplantation in under-served areas of the Middle East by helping them to establish local transplantation programs or to improve an existing program. The fellowship program gives a great opportunity to the young physicians and surgeons from this region willing to acquire some particular skills related to various aspects of organ transplantation and provides them with specific and hands-on training opportunities in host institutions. MESOT Fellows return home to share new skills and knowledge in medical and surgical transplantation and improve local standards.

The proposal to establish MFP originated from Professor Nasser Simforoosh in Tehran. Later on, it was voted and approved during the general assembly of MESOT 2006 congress held in Kuwait. In fact, most of the credit goes to Professor Mustafa Mousawi from Kuwait who worked very hard to have it done and well established. The MESOT Council formed the MFP Committee and approved its training centers: Baskent in Ankara, Turkey; SIUT in Karachi, Pakistan; Labbafi Nezhad in Tehran, Iran; Shiraz Organ Transplant Center in Shiraz, Iran; Hamed El-Issa Organ Transplant Center in Kuwait, Kuwait; King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and NUC in Mansoura, Egypt. The program was announced and well advertised. Some of the most eminent transplant surgeons and physicians from the Middle East region are heading the training process in the above-mentioned centers of excellence such as Professor Mehmet Haberal from Turkey, Professor Adib Rizvi and professor Anwar Naqvi from Pakistan, Professor Mustafa Mousawi from Kuwait, Professor Ali Malek-Hosseini and Professor Nasser Simforoosh from Iran, Professor Adel Bakr from Egypt and Professor Khalid El-Meshari from Saudi Arabia.

The selection mechanism relies on five factors on the top of which is the availability of transplant activity of a given organ in the applicant center, city, and country and a written commitment by the applicant indicating his or her intent to return home upon completion of training to establish transplant unit at home center; in addition to affiliation of the applicant's center, capability and suitability of the applicant's center, academic position and age of the applicant. The application for MFP is online through MESOT Web site available at www.mesot-tx.org. The 30th of June of each year is the deadline to apply for MFP.

The program was launched in January 2008. Yet 20 applicants from 10 Middle East countries have been selected. Ten fellows have joined their training centers, five fellows started their fellowship in 2010. So far, two fellows have successfully completed their training and returned home—one to Syria, the other to Yemen; another two fellows are about to finish their training—they are from Afghanistan and Egypt.

Our mission is too ambitious and we do have several challenges: Funding the program, expanding its services to all underserved areas in the Middle East, accepting more fellows every year, promoting deceased donor transplantation, promoting research collaboration between institutions, and training in specific transplant fields (*e.g.*, heart, lung, bone marrow, and pancreatic islet cells)

It is amazing to see how MESOT can make the Middle East countries much closer to each other away from ethnical, religious, or political background differences.

Bassam Saeed, MD,
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