17th International Meeting of the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO) held in Milan from September 11-14, 2011.

I had the opportunity of presenting my research project titled “Comparison of Clinical Outcomes in Singaporean Women Undergoing Surgical Staging via Robot-assisted Surgery and Open Laparotomy For Endometrial Cancer” on behalf of the Division of Gynecologic-Oncology, Dept of O&G at the 17th International Meeting of the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO) held in Milan from September 11-14, 2011.

The spirit of research lies in participating in the exchange of ideas, to challenge current standards of care and to validate existing ones. It is not often that as an undergraduate, one is able to receive this level of exposure. Thus, when my research project was accepted into the Meeting, I was immensely grateful for the unwavering support of my mentors Prof Yong, Prof Jeffrey Low and Dr Joseph Ng in ensuring that I was given every opportunity to attend and gain exposure. Indeed, it had not been an easy path towards the completion of our research project. I remember the countless days spent processing and analyzing clinical data after a long workday, meticulously cross-checking and finally generating our clinical findings. None of which would have been possible without the guidance and tutelage of my mentors. The process was long, but I have benefited immeasurably not just in terms of clinical knowledge, but in important skill sets in research, presentation and participating in the exchange of ideas with both local and foreign clinicians.

The Meeting spanned four days and for a young doctor-in-training, it represented the coming together of many established clinicians in the field, who delivered many enriching and well-received keynote speeches. I benefitted greatly from their incisive thought processes, and was inspired by their degree of knowledge and surgical competency. Admittedly, it was initially overwhelming to witness the vast amount of research on display during the exhibition and seminars, but this soon gave way to a subtle appreciation of the full spectrum of gynecological conditions, some of which were uncommon in the local setting. I grew to see the clinical
applications of many research findings to the local scene, which served as a personal reminder of the dynamic and constantly changing landscape in the field of O&G.

The many surgical equipment available for hands-on use by participating companies lent credence to the fact that this was indeed a wide-ranging and comprehensive Conference. It was great fun to be able to gain some practice in laparoscopy and to be kept abreast of new imaging and equipment standards, some of which may potentially find its way into our own OTs.

Of course, during the course of our stay in Milan, there were opportunities to make new acquaintances and to reconnect with former colleagues. Work aside, we were also able to catch the famed Last Supper, which was an added bonus. It was fortuitous that I was able to fit in time to revisit the Duomo which certainly ranks as a personal favourite, and to do so in the company of my mentors made it all the more special.

In all, it has indeed been an immensely enriching experience. I am grateful for the companionship of my mentors, and more importantly for providing me with the opportunity to appreciate how much room there is for me to grow and develop as a clinician.