

## A Letter to Danish Doctors

KYU HAN KIM

*Department of Dermatology, Seoul National University Hospital, Seoul, Korea. E-mail: kyuhkim@snu.ac.kr*

**Dr Kyu Han Kim from Korea visited all the Departments of Dermatology in Denmark in June this year. To show his gratitude to his Danish colleagues he wrote this letter.**

This June I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit all the Departments of Dermatology in Denmark. Firstly, I would like to thank all the Danish dermatologists for providing such a wonderful chance to see your departments and to feel your warm welcome. I have visited Departments of Dermatology at the Universities of Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen. Professor Kristian Thestrup-Pedersen made all the arrangements for my visit to Danish Dermatology and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to him. During my visit I learned a lot from you and I would like to write something to show my respect for you.

Your medical system is very different from ours in Korea. I envy your system whereby almost all the medical expenses levied on the patients are covered by your government. Of course, your high taxes make this possible, so that both doctors and patients do not need to worry about medical expenses.

You have a very good system for registering patients and for maintaining a database of patients. The patient referral system to specialists in various fields appears to work very well. This system should make your clinical investigation very productive.

In Korea too many people live together, and each department and hospital does its job quite separately and independently. Communication between hospitals is not easy. Although all the people in Korea are covered by one medical insurance system, many diseases are seemingly regarded as not critical to the patients, and very expensive drugs, even though they are essential to control patients' conditions, are not covered by our medical insurance. At least 30–50% of the medical costs must be paid by the patients themselves.

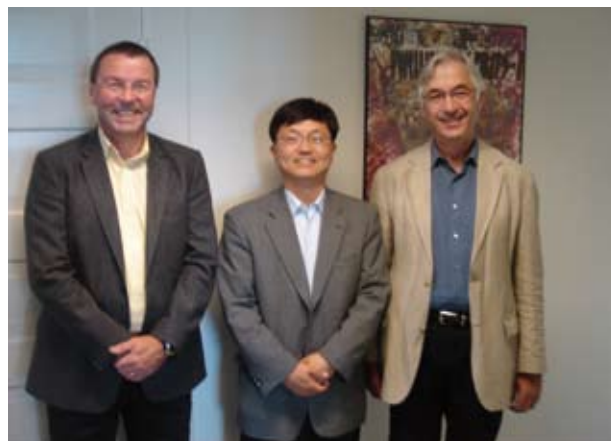
Your resident training programme is a little different from ours. Your residents carry out their clinical work quite independently and if they need help they seek advice from senior residents or from faculty members, usually the consultants or professors. You do not have a board examination for them to pass; instead you have kind of mentor system. In our system, residents carry out clinical work, especially in outpatient clinics, together with faculty members. We almost always sit with residents and see patients together; they can thus naturally

learn how to manage the patients. Of course, they must also pass the dermatology board examination as in the USA.

I am impressed by your eagerness to carry out research, both in the clinical and basic fields. In hospitals such as Aarhus, Gentofte and Bispebjerg, you are well equipped with laboratory facilities. You are quite open to others and appear to co-operate easily to carry out research together.

However, in my opinion your system may be too slow in some ways and needs to develop in a more efficient direction. It seems that nobody cares how many patients each doctor sees because your salary and the salaries of other hospital personnel is fixed for that position, at least in universities. There is a greater number of nurses in Denmark compared with Korea. There may be a long waiting list for patients to be seen by specialists. If you don't refer difficult cases to the university hospital, patients have little option but to wait for the doctors' generosity. In this sense, your system may be rather slow and you may require some incentives to operate faster, with more economic consideration than now. It is also possible that sometimes too many unnecessary tests are done, perhaps for research purposes only.

Finally, I thank you again for the hospitality you have shown me. I hope that in the very near future we can set up many collaborations with Danish dermatologists.



*Fig. 1. Dr Kyu Han Kim with Professor Carsten Bindslev-Jensen (left) and Professor Klaus Ejner Andersen (right) from Odense University Hospital.*