

## POGO Scholar Experience – IPOS® 2024

### Dr. Lunemo Sakafu – Tanzania



**Dr. Lunemo Sakafu**

My name is Dr. Lunemo Sakafu, orthopaedic and trauma surgeon from Mbeya, Tanzania.

I am one of the POGO scholars who attended the International Pediatric Orthopaedic Symposium (IPOS®) organized by POSNA in Orlando, FL, in December 2024.

I was motivated to attend the course because it provides a large learning platform with hands-on teaching labs and close interactive sessions. Pediatric orthopaedic quality of care in Tanzania, and most of lower income countries, is very poor, with little or no resources allocated to pediatric orthopaedics. There are very few pediatric orthopaedic specialists in this region. I was eager to attend and learn to improve the quality of care and also to be able to train my fellow colleagues so that we can all deliver a standard of care and educate the community together.

I also wanted to meet experienced pediatric orthopaedic surgeons to interact and discuss different ways that we treat the same cases because of different knowledge levels and resource availability. This was a great experience and provided an opportunity that does not present itself frequently.

It was great to learn proper management of supracondylar fractures, effective techniques on pinning elbows in pediatrics, and how to assess stability of the fixation. The best I learnt was not to worry much on putting a cast after pinning, as I thought it might encourage elbow stiffness. They all regain motion without problems.

The breakout sessions on limb deformity correction were very good, as I am faced with a lot of pediatric deformity due to Blount's disease and rickets caused by poor nutrition. These present very late with severe deformity that are not easy to treat with ring fixators, which we do not have. It was great to learn how to do proper pre-operative planning on these cases and get good correction.

Spine pediatrics is not a well-developed practice in Tanzania because of the cost of spine implants. Learning the importance of spine correction and its significance was an eye-opening experience.

Management of cerebral palsy along with hip complications in these children has always been tough for me and my colleagues. It was great to participate in a two-day lecture and hands-on session on hip osteotomy. This has improved not only my knowledge but that of my colleagues too, and we are seeing better surgeries and good outcome.

### Network and Interactions

I had the opportunity to make a lot of connections with a number of exhibitors who are happy to work with partners from Sub Saharan Africa. One of them, Biocomposites, is already working with us in a small capacity, and we are working to improve our partnership. This was a great opportunity for me and my country as a whole.

There were great interactions with surgeons from the US and Canada who have been travelling to Africa and others who are looking to start coming to Africa. Meetings with residents allowed me to hear their expectations and how they are learning. I met some research fellows too, which was great as now they are helping us develop better research for publications.



*Dr. Sakafu made valuable connections with exhibitors during IPOS® 2024.*

### **Personal Insight**

I was able to learn and expand my knowledge of pediatric orthopaedics together with skills, especially pelvic osteotomies and lower limb deformity corrections. These topics, together with pediatric spine, are among areas which we are not doing very well at my hospital and country. It was a great honor to be presented with an opportunity to learn from great tutors in the world.

We have learned to come with proper pediatric planning and care for our patients and have an individualized approach to each case so that we can maximize the outcome. We have made a new SOPs and guideline approach to some pediatric cases that will benefit our children, including

- Fixation of supracondylar fractures
- Approach to limb deformity correction
- Management of hip dislocation in CP children
- Femur fracture management, spica, and submuscular plating

This was one of the best courses I have attended, with a lot of exceptionally good sessions and talks meant to improve clinical skills. Teaching and lecturers are meant to improve outcome of the patients much in practical applicability of the knowledge we have and sharing experience. I wish to attend the IPOS® meeting again in the future.