

CHAPTER 1

INTERNATIONAL CHINESE HARD TISSUE SOCIETY THE POWER THAT CONNECTS THE WORLD OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

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It is a delight to see the fruition of the published book on bone biology and osteoporosis compiled by ICHTS in its 10th anniversary. ICHTS has come a long way from a small group of scientists gathering at the Sun Valley International Hard Tissue Workshop to a professional organization with over 700 members around the world.

The mission of ICHTS is to promote scientific and professional excellence and to enhance communication among scientists of Chinese heritage and other international scholars in the field of hard tissue research and related areas. As it has grown in the past ten years, ICHTS has gone through excitements, challenges and inevitable growing pains and has mature into a cohesive and strong organization. ICHTS has participated, sponsored, and organized various scientific events to promote information exchanges and research collaborations around the world. In this short overview, we invite you to join us on the growing path of ICHTS and its impact on its members and the overall scientific community.

1. Sun Valley, Idaho – the birthplace of ICHTS

Ten years ago (1994), a small group of Chinese scientists attended the 24th International Sun Valley Hard Tissue Workshop. The workshop was an annual event since 1965, organized by Dr. Webster Jee, a professor at the University of Utah and a pioneer of bone biology and bone histomorphometry. These scientists - Web Jee, Mei-Shu Shih, Jian

Li, David Ke, Liya Tang, Mei Li, Pancras Wong, Linda Ma, and Baijin Han, *et al* had known each other and/or been working together, over the years. Coming from the same cultural background, they shared similar interests and recognized the potential synergy of a cohesive supporting group to facilitate scientific exchanges and to assist career growth of new comers. During this meeting, the seed was planted to establish a professional group. It was named the North American Chinese Hard Tissue Society. In about two years as the membership significantly expanded with scientists joining from Europe and other parts of world, the Society was renamed as International Chinese Hard Tissue Society (ICHTS). Dr. Mei-Shu Shih served as a coordinator and then the first president of the Society. Dr. Shih charged the establishment of the society mission, bylaw and charters, and newsletters. This was a critical step that laid a professional foundation for the future growth of the Society. The Society members started to communicate frequently and convened whenever they could to discuss science and life. Upon Dr. Webster Jee started his term as the 2nd president, Jian Li (the 3rd president) chartered the development of the society logo and the Chinese heading as we are still using today (Fig. 1). It was also during this period of time that Jian Li launched the first website of ICHTS and secured the official web domain: www.ichts.org.

One of the first expansions of membership was to those Chinese researchers attending the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research (ASBMR), since it attracts most of the attendees around the world in the research field of bone and mineral. With more members joining in, the membership meetings started to take place in conjunction with the annual ASBMR meeting. The format was a semi-formal gathering, mostly a gathering in a Chinese restaurant. The members got to hear the society update, participated in scientific discussions, and enjoyed great Chinese food. It remained to be the single most effective networking event that new and old members got to know each other quickly.

In 2000 when leadership team recognized that dinner and society business meeting were not a good match since activities at the dinner table took much attention away from the society business. A renovation took place and for the first time that the ICHTS annual meeting was held



Fig. 1. The society logo and the Chinese heading, developed by Jian Li.

in a formal meeting room at the Crowne Plaza Toronto Center on a Sunday evening during the ASBMR meeting in 2000. Only light refreshments were provided. Much to the delight of the organizers, such a meeting format was well received and the society business discussion became much more productive. This meeting format continued for the following years until today.

In the early years and continuing, the Society began to invite distinguished honorary members to ICHTS of all nationalities. To name a few here: Douglas Axelrod, Charlie Bleau, David Burr, David Dempster, Harold Frost, Juerg Gasser, Harry Genant, George Jaworski, Chris Jerome, Conrad Johnston, Stephan Krane, David Lacey, Robert Lindsay, T. Jack Martin, Les Matthews, Gregory Mundy, Carol Pibeam, Robert Recker, Gideon Rodan, Tom Sanchez, Masahiko Sato, Mitchell Schaffler, Hans Schiessl, William Sietsma, Steve Teitelbaum, David Thompson, Tom Wronski. Over the years, these distinguished scientists and business leaders served as mentors and sponsors and contributed toward the nurturing of ICHTS or its members. Some became close personal and family friends.

When Dr. David Ke became the president in 2000, efforts began to focus on formulating the society development strategy and establishing effective operating structures. One of the important working principles set during this time was that ICHTS would collaborate primarily with organizations whose main purpose was to promote scientific exchanges,

not financial gains. Such principles set a tone in the later decision-makings on the society positioning in dealing with potential collaborators. It was also during this time that executive offices were not only established but also put into effective operation. For example, establishment of audit committee independent from Treasurer and the President, and setting up expense limits that can be authorized by society President and Chairman ensured the just use of the society budget and the transparency of accounting.

In May 2003, ICHTS proudly re-launched its website incorporating the latest web technologies and a professional look, through a friendship contribution of Steve Surman, a web professional at Procter & Gamble. The site is subsequently maintained by Ming-qing Chen, with Darren Ji being the primary content owner. In May 2004, ICHTS launched its Chinese mirror site in Beijing (www.ichts.org.cn), developed by Dong Li, providing much easier access to the growing members from China and Asia.

In ten years, the society has gone through transitions of five presidents, with as much joys as the growing pains. Nevertheless, when the five past and current presidents got together in Minneapolis in September 2003 (Fig. 2), they shared one smiling content – ICHTS has come a long way, and is becoming an irreplaceable powerhouse to nurture the growth of its members and the scientific community.

2. The Consummate Union of the Chinese Philosophy and Western Logics

The over 700 plus ICHTS members today consist of diverse backgrounds connected by the common bond of Chinese heritage and the shared interest of promoting ICHTS' mission.. Many of its members and honorary members are from different nationalities and ethnicities, sharing a same enthusiasm on what ICHTS can bring into the hard tissue field.

Members of ICHTS are consistently yielding outstanding contributions to the research community through scientific publications and presentations. Many have achieved world-class recognition, becoming leaders in academia, pharmaceutical and biotechnology

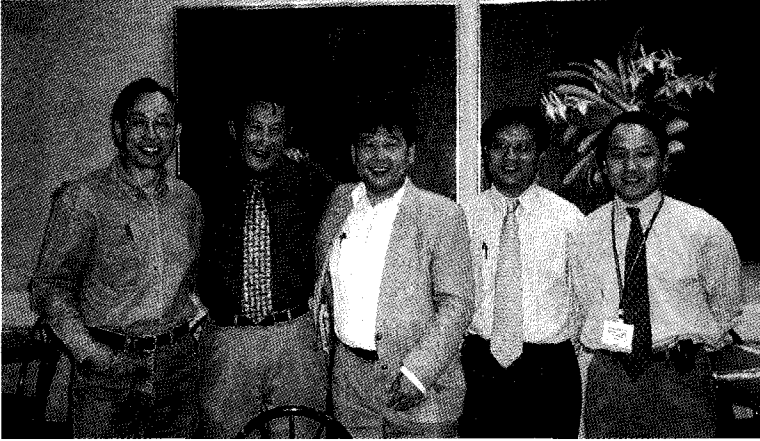


Fig. 2. It has been a joyful journey overall –five ICHTS presidents got together in September 2003, Minneapolis, MN, *from left to right*:

1st President: Mei-Shu Shih, DVM, PhD (1994 - 1996)

2nd President: Webster SS Jee, PhD (1996 - 1997)

3rd President: Xiao-Jian Li, MD (1997 - 2000)

4th President: Hua-Zhu David Ke, MD (2000 - 2003)

5th President: Darren Xiaohui Ji, MD, PhD (2003 - 2005).

industries. In a world of constantly changing rules, ICHTS members have started to realize that more than ever, networking and collaboration have become critical components of one's sustained success, in science and in professional career. More and more intra- and inter-continental collaboration and partnership among the ICHTS members have been established. Energized by the profound economic and scientific potential of China, many ICHTS members have ongoing working relationships or hold joint appointments in Chinese academic institutions. Some of the Society members have been recognized with prestigious awards, such as "Yangtze River Scholars" of the Chinese government and the "Hundred Scientists Plan" which honors outstanding contributions in the advancement of science and research in China.

Anytime we look at these outstanding members either as a group or an individual, we could easily identify some common traits that are deeply rooted in the consummate union of the Chinese philosophy and Western logics. The Chinese brain nurtured patience, perseverance and

being contented with achievement of baby steps, while the Western teaching provides the perpetual optimism and confidence of being oneself.

It is under such nicely married cultures that ICHTS becomes an exceptional source of scientific expertise and cultural strength, promoting communication and synergy and cultivating the professional and scientific excellence.

3. A Cultivator of Technical and Career Growth

Over the years, ICHTS continued to introduce programs to help the growth of its members. Each year, ICHTS grants a number of travel awards to the outstanding young scientists to attend scientific conferences such as ASBMR, ORS (Orthopedic Research Society) and CSOS (Chinese Speaking Orthopedic Society) (Fig. 3). These awards not only provide recognition of outstanding scientific contributions, but also give the opportunity for the young members to be exposed to and get connected with the mainstream development of each field. In 2004, the leadership team decided to re-name the ICHTS travel award as ICHTS Webster Jee Young Investigator Award, in honor of the pioneering contributions of Dr. Web Jee to the hard tissue research and to the development of ICHTS.

The Career Development Workshop and Grant Writing Workshop have proved very useful for the junior members and faculties. The mentorship program was also developed to provide advice and guidance in technical and career issues.

Everyone needs a hand from time to time – this is the principle that many of the senior ICHTS members make themselves available in helping the junior members with the problems such as job seeking, reference letters and guidance in personal and technical growth.

4. A Model of Alliance and Collaboration for Enhanced Scientific Exchanges

Uniquely positioned to provide technical expertise and cultural bridge, ICHTS has been collaborating vigorously with various societies and

organizations around the world to promote science and cultural exchanges. The primary means of such promotions is through alliance to co-organize or co-sponsor scientific meetings or workshops. During his presidency between 1997 – 2000, Dr. Jian Li initiated a number of collaborations with many prominent colleagues in China including Dr. Meng Xunwu of Chinese Medical Association, Dr. Liu Zhonghou of Chinese Osteoporosis Foundation, Dr. Zhao Yanling of HOMA Symposium.

Since 1999, ICHTS started to make more strategic choices and co-sponsored the Third International Osteoporosis Conference in Xian, China (1999), the SIROT meeting in Egypt (2002), and International Bone Research Instructional Course and Hands-on Workshop (2002). Most significantly, ICHTS co-organized with the Chinese Medical Association (CMA) the 1st International Conference of Osteoporosis and Bone Research (ICOBR) in Beijing in 2003. This was the first time that ICHTS acted in China as a co-organizer of an

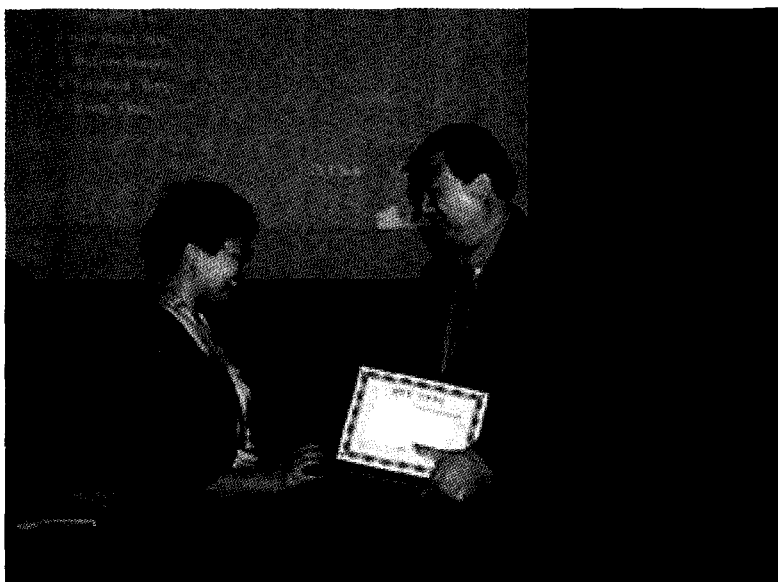


Fig. 3. Dr. Di Chen (right), Vice-President of ICHTS, is conferring a travel award to Ms. Lanjuan Zhao, a graduate student from Creighton University, during the 2003 annual meeting, Minneapolis, MN.

international conference. The meeting was a recognized success in the quality of scientific programs and the level of audience participations. Based on this experience, the two parties agreed to continue the collaborating in every two years to co-organize ICOBR in China. The next one is to be held in October 20-24, 2005.

In 2004, ICHTS formed another significant alliance with Orthopaedic Research Society (ORS) to co-promote ICHTS travel awards to the ORS meeting. ICHTS had its formal entry into the ORS arena and recruited over 80 new members in two months.

Recognizing the growing potential of the research capabilities in China, ICHTS has developed working relationships with the Chinese embassy and consulate in the US to seek opportunities for joint development. ICHTS has also reached tentative agreements with a few Chinese academic institutions to establish ICHTS research centers in China.

5. Sponsorship and Friendships

ICHTS's achievements could not be parted from the continuous sponsorships from our friends and corporate partners including (in alphabetical order):

- Amgen
- Hologic
- Merck, Inc.
- Norland
- OrthoLogic
- OsteoMetrics
- Pfizer, Inc
- Pfizer Foundation
- Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals
- Scanco
- SkeleTech
- Wyeth

Over the years ICHTS has developed strong friendships with these individuals and corporations, generating synergies to benefit the growth of all parties.

6. An Exciting Journey and a Bright future

Looking into the future, ICHTS is committed to becoming an energizing ground for our members around the world to unite and help each other. ICHTS will continue its strong involvement in the scientific exchanges, and will make special effort to promote our members' career growth. For example, periodic topics and discussions will be facilitated in the area of general skills such as communication and leadership. The mentorship program will be strengthened to allow junior members to receive adequate guidance and advice when needed. We will keep improving communications and connections with our colleagues and members in China to help with education, and adequate representation of their interest in the international communities.

There are a number of goals ICHTS strives to achieve in the next five years. We plan to break into the other countries in Asia than China for sustained membership growth. We will expand our presence to the scientific meetings such as those of American Dental Association and Bioengineering society for enhanced networking and collaboration opportunities. We will attract more clinicians to broaden the scope of our expertise in the hard tissue field. We will provide training fellowships and grants to help junior members to jumpstart their careers. We will promote the exploration of Chinese herbs for standardized therapeutic uses. Most of all, we seek to establish an ICHTS forum to establish scientific and cultural synergies among the scientists from the East and the West.

We strongly encourage our members to bring new ideas to help the society to grow. We cordially invite those who are not yet members to join this exciting and dynamic society. To join the society, please visit the ICHTS website (www.ichts.org).