From 16-18 February 2017, I attended the 26th Conference of the Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver (APASL) in Shanghai. This conference is an annual academic conference in the field of Hepatology and is organized by the APASL. It is a major Hepatology conference in the Asia-Pacific region and is well-attended by an international audience. This conference was an eye-opening experience for me as it was the first time I delivered an oral presentation at an international conference. My paper, entitled “Inverse relationship of hepatic steatosis and hepatitis B viremia: results of a matched case control study” was presented in the “Viral Hepatitis B and D – Viral, Immunology and Pathogenesis” session. I received constructive comments from professors and fellow researchers after the presentation and these remarks are very helpful for me to further improve my work.

Aside from my own presentation, I attended oral presentation sessions by other researchers. In particular, a session on hepatocellular carcinoma diagnosis caught my interest, as the research group used circulating cell-free DNA, an emerging concept in clinical biochemistry, to diagnose hepatocellular carcinoma. This method is termed liquid biopsy and is generating increasing research interests in recent years as a non-invasive and accurate modality to diagnosis a range of different diseases. This presentation explored the utility of this diagnostic test in hepatocellular carcinoma and discussed how it may emerge as an essential clinical diagnostic tool in the future.

Last but not least, I attended plenary lectures led by world-leading experts on chronic hepatitis B. The concept of inactive carrier state in chronic hepatitis B has been proposed for many years, however, the management of such patients is still a challenge to many clinicians. This clinical modality also has significant impact on healthcare resources allocation, as inactive carriers may be managed by general practitioners and not by Hepatologists, hence reducing the number of patients seen by specialists and shortening the waiting time for patients who are in need. The evidence regarding the management of inactive chronic hepatitis B is continuously evolving and it is difficult for non-specialists to keep up with the newest developments. The plenary lecture on the management of inactive hepatitis B carriers provided a succinct and up-to-date summary on this important topic. The lecture also enabled me to learn about the latest advancements and clinical research
in the field, giving me new insight and providing me with directions for my own research.

All in all, the 26th APASL Conference was a valuable opportunity for me to present my research work and explore the cutting-edge research in Hepatology. As a researcher, it was highly satisfying to present my paper to an international audience and to fellow researchers after all the hard-work. The stimulating discussions with experts also provided me with a better understanding of my research area and will enable me to improve my work. The conference was an excellent learning experience and is highly beneficial to my growth as a researcher. I look forward to attending the conference again next year.