

Heading

Dear Prof Reid and the SAGES team

I would like to thank you all for sponsoring our trip to Cairo for the recent AMAGE Gastroenterology congress. I had never before been to Egypt and as such the experience was fascinating. A city of some 20 million people seems to function well by various degrees of organized chaos, with the six lane traffic crawling along highways originally intended for three lanes. Kilometers of apartment blocks make space the one commodity everyone is keen to acquire. The luxurious hotels we were accommodated in being in stark contrast to most of the local homes and apartments. In between all the hectic activity of a modern African city are constant reminders of the magnificent past that the Egyptian people originate from, and remain so proud of. The various rulers of the different dynasties have each added to the architectural, religious and cultural influences, some of which are fortunately still visible.

The Egyptian Museum with its fantastic treasures was a highlight for me, and I truly hope Egypt will be able to maintain this for future generations to marvel at. And no trip to Egypt would be complete without a trip on camel back through the Pyramids! I have new respect for the locals who are able to casually sit cross-legged on top of their camels controlling them mainly by verbal commands or sounds. I dared the markets too, with all their exotic wares, but must confess to being a very poor negotiator as regards a fair price, and as such wasn't much of a challenge to any tradesman. I am sure once one travels out of Cairo, the Nile River becomes as majestic as one imagines it to be, but within the city it is too built up to fully appreciate.

The congress offered a range of very interesting topics, and was very well organized by the local organizing

committee. They have such a diversity of languages and countries involved that organizing this large meeting cannot be an easy feat at all. I much enjoyed meeting my contemporaries from other regions, and on discussion with them, I believe our medical training and services in South Africa still have much to offer. Most of the research papers were delegated posters, which were poorly received unfortunately. The lectures were offered by eminent local experts and a few international speakers, and were most interesting to listen to. I must admit not to have appreciated how problematic viral hepatitis is in Egypt, much like HIV is to Southern Africa. Thank you to SAGES, AstraZeneca the sponsors, and the organizers of the AMAGE congress for this eye-opening experience.

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